



NOTE.—*Five hundred and twenty copies printed for England and America. Each copy numbered. Type distributed.*

No. 372

MONTESQUIEU

PERSIAN LETTERS

Newly Translated into English

WITH NOTES AND MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR

BY

JOHN DAVIDSON

Author of "Scaramouch in Naxos," "Perseus," &c.

WITH PORTRAIT AND EIGHT ETCHINGS BY ED. DE BEAUMONT

ENGRAVED BY E. BOILVIN

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

LONDON

PRIVATELY PRINTED

MDCCCXCII

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ENGRAVED BY E. BOILVIN.

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PERSIAN LETTERS.

Letter LXXVI.

USBK TO HIS FRIEND IBSEN, AT SMYRNA.

EUROPEAN law is dead against suicide. Those who kill themselves suffer, as it were, a second death : they are dragged with ignominy through the streets : their infamy is published, and their goods confiscated.

It seems to me, Ibsen, that this law is very unjust. When I am loaded with grief, misery, and contumely, why should I be hindered from putting an end to my sufferings, and cruelly deprived of a remedy which is in my hands?

Why should I be forced to labour for a society to which I refuse to belong? why, in spite of myself, should I be held to an agreement made without my consent? Society is founded upon mutual advantage; but, when it becomes burdensome to me, what hinders me from leaving it? Life was given me as a blessing; when it ceases to be so I can give it up: the cause ceasing, the effect ought also to cease.

Will any prince require me to be his subject, if I reap

none of the benefits of subjection? Can my fellow-citizens require our lots to be so unequal ; theirs, usefulness—mine, despair? Will God, unlike other benefactors, condemn me to receive favours which are a burden to me?

I am obliged to obey the laws while I live under them ; but, if I cease to live, can they still bind me?

“But,” someone may say, “you disturb the order of Providence. God has joined your soul to your body ; in separating them, you oppose His designs and resist His will.”

What force is there in this argument? Do I disturb the order of Providence, when I alter the qualities of matter, and square a ball which the first laws of motion, that is to say the laws of creation and preservation, made round? Certainly not ; I only exercise a right which has been given me ; and, in that sense, I can disturb, as my fancy dictates, the whole order of Nature, without anyone being able to say that I oppose Providence.

When my soul shall be separated from my body, will there be less order, less harmony, in the universe? Do you think that that new combination will be less perfect, and less dependent upon general laws ; that the world would lose anything by it ; that the works of God would be less great, or rather less immense?

Do you think that my body, become a blade of grass, a worm, a grass-green turf, will be changed into a work of nature less worthy of her ; and that my soul, freed from all its earthly trammels, will become less sublime?

All these ideas, my dear Ibben, have their only source in our pride. We do not feel our littleness; and, however small we may be, we wish to count for something in the universe, to cut a figure there, and to be of some consequence in it. We imagine that the annihilation of such a perfect being would degrade all nature: and we cannot conceive that one man more or less in the world—what do I say?—that the whole world, that a hundred millions of worlds¹ like ours, can be more than one small frail atom, which God perceives only because His knowledge is all-embracing.

Paris, the 15th of the moon of
Saphar, 1715.

Letter LXXVII.²

IBBEN TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

My dear Usbek, it seems to me that, in the eyes of a true Mussulman, misfortunes are not so much punishments as warnings. Those are priceless days upon which we are led to atone for our offences. It is the time of prosperity that ought to be curtailed. To what end is all our impatience, but to show us that we are seeking

¹ *Cent millions de têtes* in some editions. *Terres* seems preferable, however, as it is an anticlimax to proceed from all men to a hundred millions.

² This letter was inserted in the edition of 1754 as a foil to that which precedes it.

happiness, independently of Him who gives it, because He is happiness itself?

If a human creature is composed of two beings, and if the acknowledgment of the necessity of preserving their union is the chief mark of submission to the decrees of our Creator, that necessity should be made a religious law; and if the enforced preservation of this union will make men more responsible for their actions, it should be made a civil law.

Smyrna, the last day of the moon of
Saphar, 1715.

Letter LXXVIII.

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *.

I SEND you a copy of a letter, written by a Frenchman who is in Spain: I believe that you will be glad to see it.

I have travelled for six months in Spain and Portugal, where I lived among people despising all nations except the French, whom they honour with their hate. Gravity is the distinctive characteristic of both nations: it has two chief methods of manifestation—spectacles and moustaches.

Spectacles demonstrate clearly that the wearer of them is an accomplished man of science, who has injured his sight by the extent and profundity of his reading;

and every nose which they adorn or burden, may pass, without contradiction, for the nose of a savant.¹

As regards the moustache, in itself it is respectable, independently of results ; although sometimes it has been of great use in the service of the king, and in the maintenance of national honour, as appears from the case of a famous Portuguese general in the Indies :² for, being in want of money, he cut off one of his moustaches, and offered it to the inhabitants of Goa as a pledge for the loan of twenty thousand pistoles, and the money was advanced at once ; afterwards he redeemed his moustache with honour.

One can easily understand how such a grave and phlegmatic people might very well be haughty ; and so they are. They usually base their pride upon two matters of sufficient importance. Of those who live in Spain and Portugal, the most uplifted are such as are called old Christians ; that is to say, such as are not descended from the converts to Christianity made by the Inquisition in later times. Those who dwell in the Indies are not less elated by the consideration that they have the sublime merit to be, as they say, white-skinned men. There was never in the seraglio of the Grand Seigneur, a sultana so proud of her beauty, as the oldest and ugliest rascal among them is of his complexion of pale olive, when in a Mexican town he sits at his own

¹ Madame d'Aulnoy has a similar eulogy of spectacles in her "Voyage d'Espagne."

² Jean de Castro.—(M.)

door with his arms folded. A man of such importance, a creature so perfect, would not work for all the wealth of the world ; and could never persuade himself to compromise the honour and the dignity of his colour by vile mechanic industry.

For you must know, that, when a man possesses some special merit in Spain, as, for example, when he can add to the qualities which I have already described, that of owning a long sword, or that of having learnt from his father to strum a jangling guitar, he works no more : his honour is concerned in the repose of his limbs. He who remains seated ten hours a day obtains exactly double the respect paid to one who rests only five, because nobility is acquired by sitting still.

But, although these invincible foes of work make a great show of philosophic calm, they have nothing of the sort in their hearts ; for they are always in love. In dying of languor under their mistress's windows they have not their match in the world ; no Spaniard is esteemed gallant who is without a cold.

They are, firstly, bigots—secondly, jealous. They are particularly careful not to expose their wives to the attempts of a soldier riddled with wounds, or of some decrepit magistrate ; but they will shut them up with a fervent novice who casts down his eyes, or a robust Franciscan with a bold glance.

They allow their wives to appear with uncovered bosoms ; but they would not have anyone see their heels, lest hearts should be ensnared by a glimpse of their

feet.¹ They say all the world over that love is cruelly rigorous: in Spain it is especially so. The women cure love, but only with the substitution of other suffering: there often remains a long and disagreeable memorial of an extinguished passion.

They have certain little courtesies which in France would appear out of place; for example, an officer never strikes a soldier without asking his permission; and the Inquisition always apologizes to a Jew before burning him.

Spaniards who are not burned seem so fond of the Inquisition, that it would be ill-natured to deprive them of it. Indeed, I should like to see another established; not for heretics, but for heresiarchs who ascribe to paltry monkish practices the same efficacy as to the seven sacraments; who worship what they should only respect; and who are so devout that they are hardly Christians.

Wit and common sense are to be found among the Spaniards; but let no one seek for them in their books. Glance at one of their libraries, with romances on the one side, and the schoolmen on the other; and you would say that the arrangement had been made, and the whole collected by some secret foe of human reason.

Their only good book is one which was written to expose the absurdity of all the others.²

¹ The exhibition of the foot, according to Madame D'Aulnoy's "Voyage d'Espagne," was regarded in Spain as being "*la dernière javeur*."

² "Don Quixote."

They have made immense discoveries in the New World, and yet they do not know thoroughly their own country: there are upon their rivers an undiscovered bridge or two, and among their mountains races unknown to them.¹

They say that the sun rises and sets within their dominions; but it must also be said that in making his journey he encounters only ruined fields and desolate countries.

It would not grieve me, Usbek, to see a letter written to Madrid by a Spaniard who was travelling in France: I think he would have little difficulty in avenging his nation. What a grand opportunity for an even-tempered, thoughtful man! I imagine he would begin his description of Paris in this way:

There is a house here in which they place mad people: one would at first expect it to be the largest in the city; but no, the remedy is much too insignificant for the disease. Without doubt, the French, being held in very slight esteem by their neighbours, shut up some madmen in this house, to create the impression that those who are at large are sane.

There I leave my Spaniard. Farewell, my dear Usbek.

Paris, the 17th of the moon of
Saphar, 1715.

¹ The Batuecas.—(M.) This is an invention of some wag whom Montesquieu seems to have taken seriously.

Letter LXXIX.

USBK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE.

MOST legislators have been men of inferior capacity whom chance exalted over their fellows, and who took counsel almost exclusively of their own prejudices and whims.

It would seem that they had not even a sense of the greatness and dignity of their work: they amused themselves by framing childish institutions, well devised indeed to please small minds, but discrediting their authors with people of sense.

They flung themselves into useless details; and gave their attention to individual interests: the sign of a narrow genius, which grasps things piecemeal and cannot take a general view.

Some of them have been so affected as to employ another language than the vernacular—a ridiculous thing in a framer of laws; for how can they be obeyed if they are not known?

They have often abolished needlessly those which were already established—that is to say, they have plunged nations into the confusion which always accompanies change.

It is true that, by reason of some extravagance springing rather from the nature than from the mind of man, it is sometimes necessary to change certain laws. But the case is rare; and when it happens it requires the most

delicate handling ; much solemnity ought to be observed, and endless precautions taken, in order to lead the people to the natural conclusion that the laws are most sacred, since so many formalities are necessary to their abrogation.

Often they have made them too subtle, following logical instead of natural equity. As a consequence such laws have been found too severe ; and a spirit of justice required that they should be set aside ; but the cure was as bad as the disease. Whatever the laws may be, obedience to them is necessary ; they are to be regarded as the public conscience, with which all private consciences ought to be in conformity.

It must, however, be admitted that some legislators in their attention to one matter have shown sufficient wisdom ; and that is, in giving fathers so much power over their children : nothing is a better lightener of the magistrate's labours, nothing tends more to keep the courts of justice empty, in short, nothing is more conducive to tranquillity in a state, for morality always makes better citizens than law.

Of all powers it is that which is least abused ; it is the most sacred of all magistracies—the only one which does not spring from a contract, which, indeed, precedes all contracts.

It has been noticed that families are best ruled in those countries where there is a large paternal discretion in matters of reward and punishment ; fathers represent the Creator of the universe, who, although able to lead men

by His love, does not refrain from binding them to Himself still more closely by motives of hope and fear.

I cannot finish this letter without pointing out the capricious turn of mind of the French. It is said that they have retained many things in the Roman laws which are useless, and even worse than useless; from them, however, they have not derived the paternal power, which they have established as the source of all lawful authority.

Paris, the 18th of the moon of
Saphar, 1715.

Letter LXXV.

THE CHIEF BLACK EUNUCH TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

YESTERDAY, some Armenians brought to the seraglio a young Circassian slave whom they wished to sell. I made her enter the secret apartments; I undressed her, I examined her with the eyes of a judge; and the more I examined, the more beauties I found. A virginal shame seemed anxious to hide them from my view: I saw how much it cost her to obey: she blushed upon beholding herself naked, even before me, exempt, as I am, from the passions which can alarm decency, and entirely delivered from the dominion of the sex—the servant of modesty in the freest actions, looking only with the chastest glance, and capable of inspiring nothing but innocence.

From the moment I judged her worthy of you, I cast down my eyes, and threw over her a scarlet cloak; I

placed a ring of gold upon her finger, I prostrated myself at her feet, I adored her as the queen of your heart. I paid the Armenians, and hid her from every eye. Happy Usbek ! you possess more beauties than all the palaces of the east enclose. What a pleasure to find on your return whatever Persia has that is most ravishing, and to see in your seraglio all the graces reborn as fast as time and possession work their destruction !

The Seraglio at Fatme, the 1st of the
first moon of Rebiab, 1715.

Letter LXXXI.¹

USBK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE.

SINCE I have been in Europe, my dear Rhedi, I have seen many forms of government. It is not here as in Asia, where the rules of policy are everywhere the same.

I have often inquired which form of government is most conformable to reason. It seems to me that the most perfect is that which attains its object with the least friction ; so that the government which leads men by following their propensities and inclinations is the most perfect.

If under a mild government the people are as submissive as under a severe one, the former is to be preferred,

¹ This letter contains much that Montesquieu developed afterwards in his "Esprit des Lois."



THE TWO FIGURES

since it is more rational, severity being a motive foreign to reason.

Remember, my dear Rhedi, that obedience to the laws in a state is not measured by the degree of cruelty in the punishments. In countries where penalties are moderate, they are dreaded as much as in those where they are atrocious and tyrannical.

Whether a government be mild or cruel, there must be degrees of punishment; the gravity of the chastisement must always be in proportion to the gravity of the crime. Our imagination adapts itself to the customs of the country in which we live. Eight days' imprisonment, or a lighter punishment, has a greater effect on the mind of a European brought up in a mild-mannered country, than the loss of an arm has upon an Asiatic. A certain degree of dread attaches to a certain degree of punishment, and each feels it in his own way: a punishment which would not rob a Turk of a single quarter of an hour's sleep, would overwhelm a Frenchman with infamy and despair.

Besides, I do not see that police regulations, justice, and equity, are better observed in Turkey, in Persia, or in the dominions of the Mogul, than in the Republics of Holland, and of Venice, and even in England: it does not appear that fewer crimes are committed there, and that men, intimidated by the greatness of the punishments, are more obedient to the laws.

On the contrary, I note a source of injustice and vexation in the midst of these very states.

I find even the prince, who is himself the law, less master there than anywhere else.

I observe that, at times when severe punishments are inflicted, there are always tumults, which nobody commands, and that, when once authority depending upon violence is set at nought, there remains with no one sufficient power to restore it ;

That the certainty of punishment itself strengthens and increases the disorder ;

That in these states a petty revolt never takes place ; and that an uprising follows the first murmur of sedition without a moment's interval ;

That in them great events are not necessarily prepared by great causes : on the contrary, the least accident produces a great revolution, often as unforeseen by those who cause it as by those who suffer from it.

When Osman, Emperor of the Turks, was deposed,¹ none of those who committed that crime had any intention of doing so : they simply asked, as suppliants, that justice should be done for some wrong : a voice, which no one knew, issued from the crowd by chance ; it pronounced the name of Mustapha, and suddenly Mustapha was Emperor.

Paris, the 2nd of the first moon of
Rebiab, 1715.

¹ In 1622.

Letter LXXXII.

NARGUM, PERSIAN ENVOY IN MUSCOVY, TO USBEK,
AT PARIS.

OF all the nations of the world, my dear Usbek, none has excelled that of the Tartars in the splendour and magnitude of its conquests. This people is the veritable ruler of the earth : all the others seem to be intended for its service ; it is alike the founder and the destroyer of empires ; in all times, it has afforded the world signs of its prowess ; in every age it has been the scourge of the nations.

Twice the Tartars conquered China, and they still keep it in subjection.

They rule over those vast territories which form the Mogul's empire.

Masters of Persia, they sit upon the throne of Cyrus and Hystaspes. They have subdued Muscovy. Under the name of Turks, they have made immense conquests in Europe, Asia, and Africa ; and they are the dominant power in these three quarters of the earth.

In more remote times, from them issued forth some of those races who overthrew the Roman empire.¹

What are the conquests of Alexander compared with those of Zenghis Khan ?

Nothing is wanting to this victorious nation except historians to celebrate its achievements.

¹ The Huns.

What immortal deeds have been buried in oblivion ! Of how many empires founded by them is the origin unknown to us ! This warlike nation, occupied exclusively with its immediate glory, and certain of conquest in every age, gave no thought to the commemoration of its fame.

Moscow, the 4th of the first moon of
Rebiab, 1715.

Letter LXXXIII.

RICA TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA.

ALTHOUGH the French are great talkers, there is nevertheless among them a sort of silent dervishes, called Carthusians. They are said to cut out their tongues on entering the convent ; and it is much to be desired that all other dervishes would deprive themselves in the same way of that which their profession renders useless to them.

Talking of these taciturn people reminds me that there are others who excel them in taciturnity, and who have a very remarkable gift. These are they who know how to talk without saying anything ; and who carry on a conversation for two whole hours without its being possible to discover their meaning, to rehearse their talk, or to remember a word of what they have said.

This class of people are adored by the women ; but not so much as some others who have received from

nature the charming gift of smiling at the proper time, that is to say, every moment ; and who receive with delighted approbation everything the ladies say.

But these people carry wit to its highest pitch ; for they can detect subtlety in everything, and perceive a thousand little ingenious touches in the merest common-places.

I know others of them who are fortunate enough to be able to introduce into conversation inanimate things, and to make a long story about an embroidered coat, a white peruke, a snuff-box, a cane, a pair of gloves. It is well to begin in the street to make oneself heard by the noise of a coach and a thundering rap at the door : such a prologue paves the way for the rest of the discourse ; and when the exordium is good, it secures toleration for all the nonsense which follows, but which, fortunately, arrives too late to be detected.

I assure you that these little gifts, which with us are of no account, are of great advantage here to those who are happy enough to possess them ; and that a sensible man has no chance of shining where they are displayed.

Paris, the 6th of the second moon of
Rebiab, 1715.

Letter LXXXIV.

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE.

IF there is a God, my dear Rhedi, He must of necessity be just ; because, if He were not so, He would be the worst and most imperfect of all beings.

Justice is a true relation existing between two things ; a relation which is always the same, whoever contemplates it, whether it be God, or an angel, or lastly, man himself.

It is true that men do not always perceive these relations : often indeed, when they do perceive them, they turn aside from them, their own interest being always that which they perceive most clearly. Justice cries aloud ; but her voice is hardly heard in the tumult of the passions.

Men act unjustly, because it is their interest to do so, and because they prefer their own satisfaction to that of others. They act always to secure some advantage to themselves : no one is a villain gratis ; there is always a determining motive, and that motive is always an interested one.

But it is not possible that God should ever commit an injustice. As soon as we grant that He perceives what is right, it becomes necessary that He should follow it : were it not so, as He has no need of anything and is sufficient to Himself, He would be the most wicked of all beings, having no motive for wickedness.

And so, even if there were no God, we ought always to love righteousness ; that is to say, we should endeavour to resemble that Being of whom we have so lofty an idea, and who, if He did exist, would of necessity be righteous. Freed as we would be from the yoke of religion, we would still be bound by that of justice.

Here you have, Rhedi, that which makes me believe that justice is eternal and independent of human conditions. And, if it were dependent on them, it would be a truth so terrible that we would be compelled to hide it from ourselves.

We are surrounded by men stronger than ourselves ; they can injure us in a thousand different ways, and with impunity three times out of four : what a satisfaction it is for us to know that there is in the heart of all men, an innate principle which fights in our favour, and shields us from their attempts !

Without that we would be in continual terror ; we would move among men as among lions ; and we would never feel sure for an instant of our property, our honour, and our lives.

All these considerations incense me against those doctors who represent God as a being who makes a tyrannical use of His power ; who make Him act in a manner which we would ourselves eschew for fear of offending Him ; who charge Him with all the imperfections which He punishes in us ; and who, in their inconsistency, represent Him, now as a malicious being, and now as a being who hates evil and punishes it.

When a man examines himself, what a satisfaction for him it is to find that he has a righteous heart ! That delight, austere as it is, should ravish him : he perceives that he is a being as far above those who have it not, as he is above tigers and bears. Yes, Rhedi, were I sure of following always and inviolably that idea of righteousness which I have before my eyes, I would believe myself the best of men.

Paris, the 1st of the first moon of
Gemmadi, 1715.

Letter LXXXV.

RICA TO * * *.

YESTERDAY I was at the Hotel des Invalides : if I were a king I would rather have founded that establishment than have gained three battles. Throughout it the hand of a great monarch appears. I think it is worthier of respect than any other institution in the world.

What a sight to see assembled within the same walls all those who have suffered for their country, who lived only to defend it ; and who, high-hearted as ever, but lacking their old vigour, complain only of their inability to sacrifice themselves again !

What could be worthier of admiration than the sight of these disabled warriors in their retirement, observing a discipline as strict as if they were constrained by the presence of an enemy, seeking their last satisfaction in

that semblance of war, and dividing their thoughts and emotions between the duties of religion and those of their profession.

I would have the names of those who die for their country preserved in the temples, and inscribed in registers which should be the fountain-head of glory and honour.

Paris, the 15th of the first moon of
Gemmadi, 1715.

Letter LXXXVI.¹

USBEK TO MIRZA, AT ISPAHAN.

YOU know, Mirza, that some ministers of Shah Soliman formed the design of obliging all the Armenians of Persia to quit the kingdom or become Mohammedans, in the belief that our empire will continue polluted, as long as it retains within its bosom these infidels.

If, on that occasion, bigotry had carried the day, there would have been an end to the greatness of Persia.

It is not known how the matter dropped. Neither those who made the proposition, nor those who rejected it, realized the consequences of their acts: chance performed the office of reason and of policy, and saved the empire from jeopardy greater than that which would have been entailed by a defeat in the field, and the loss of two cities.

¹ This letter is a bold and generous protest against the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

It is understood that the proscription of the Armenians would have extirpated in a single day all the merchants and almost all the artisans in the kingdom. I am sure that the great Shah Abbas would rather have lost both his arms than have signed such an order ; in sending to the Mogul and to the other kings of Ind the most industrious of his subjects, he would have felt that he was giving away the half of his dominions.

The persecution of the Guebres by our zealous Mohammedans, has obliged them to fly in crowds into the Indies, and has deprived Persia of that nation,¹ which laboured so heartily, that it alone, by its toil, was in a fair way to overcome the sterility of our land.

Only one thing remained for bigotry to do, and that was, to destroy industry ; with the result that the empire fell of itself, carrying along with it as a necessary consequence, that very religion which they wished to advance.

If unbiassed discussion were possible, I am not sure, Mirza, that it would not be a good thing for a state to have several religions.

It is worthy of note that those who profess tolerated creeds usually prove more useful to their country than those who profess the established faith ; because, being excluded from all honours, and unable to distinguish themselves except by wealth and its shows, they are led to acquire riches by their labour, and to embrace the most toilsome of occupations.

¹ The Parsees of Bombay are the descendants of the exiled Guebres.

Besides, as all religions contain some precepts advantageous to society, it is well that they should be zealously observed. Now, could there be a greater incitement to zeal than a multiplicity of religions?

They are rivals who never forgive anything. Jealousy descends to individuals: each one stands upon his guard, afraid of doing anything that may dishonour his party, and of exposing it to the contempt and unpardonable censures of the opposite side.

It has also been remarked that a new sect introduced into a state, was always the surest means of correcting the abuses of the old faith.

It is sophistry to say that it is against the interest of the prince to tolerate many religions in his kingdom: though all the sects in the world were to gather together into one state, it would not be in the least detrimental to it, because there is no creed which does not ordain obedience and preach submission.

I acknowledge that history is full of religious wars: but we must distinguish; it is not the multiplicity of religions which has produced wars; it is the intolerant spirit animating that which believed itself in the ascendant.

This is the spirit of proselytism which the Jews caught from the Egyptians, and which passed from them like an epidemic disease to the Mohammedans and the Christians.

It is, in short, that capricious mood, which in its progress can be compared only to a total eclipse of human reason.

In conclusion, even if there were no inhumanity in distressing the consciences of others, even if there did not result from such a course any of the evil effects which do spring from it in thousands, it would still be foolish to advise it. He who would have me change my religion is led to that, without doubt, because he would not change his own although force were employed; and yet he finds it strange that I will not do a thing which he himself would not do, perhaps for the empire of the world.

Paris, the 26th of the first moon of
Gemmadi, 1715.

Letter LXXXVII.

RICA TO * * *.

IT seems that every member of a family in this country controls his own actions. The authority exercised by a husband over his wife, a father over his children, a master over his slaves, is merely nominal. The law interferes in all differences; and you may be certain that it is always against the jealous husband, the sorrowing father, the exasperated master.

The other day I visited the place where justice is administered. Before getting there, I had to run the gauntlet of a crowd of young shopwomen who press you to buy in a most seductive manner. At first, the sight is sufficiently amusing; but it becomes dismal when one

enters the great halls, where all the people wear dresses even more solemn than their faces. At last one comes to the sacred place where all the secrets of families are revealed and the most hidden actions brought to light.

Here a modest girl comes to confess the torments of a virginity too long preserved, her struggles and her painful resistance ; she is so little proud of her victory that she is always on the verge of accepting defeat ; and, in order that her father may no longer be ignorant of her wants, she exposes them to everybody.¹

Then some shameless woman appears to publish the injuries she has done her husband, as a reason for a separation.

With equal modesty another comes to declare that she is tired of wearing the title, without enjoying the rights of a wife ; she reveals the hidden mysteries of the marriage night ; she wishes to be examined by the most skilful experts, and prays for a decision re-establishing her in all the rights of virginity. Some even dare to challenge their husbands, and demand from them a public contest which the presence of witnesses renders so difficult ; a test as disgraceful for the wife who passes it, as for the husband who fails to stand it.

A great number of young women, ravished or seduced, represent the men as being much worse than they are. This court resounds with love ; nothing is talked of but

¹ According to a law derived from the Romans, in the southern provinces of France daughters could compel their fathers to dower them. (See Letter CXXV.)

enraged fathers, deluded daughters, faithless lovers, afflicted husbands.

According to the law which here holds sway, every infant born in wedlock is considered the husband's; should he have good reasons to believe it not his, the law believes it for him, and relieves him of his scruples and of the necessity for inquiry.

In this tribunal judgment goes by the majority; but it is said that experience teaches that it would be wiser to follow the decision of the minority; which is natural enough, for there are very few just minds, and plenty of ill-balanced ones, as all the world knows.

Paris, the 1st of the second moon of
Gemmadi, 1715.

Letter LXXXVIII.

RICA TO * * *.

MAN, they say, is a social animal. In this matter a Frenchman appears to me to be more of a man than any other; he is the man *par excellence*, for he seems to be intended solely for society.

But I have noticed among them some who are not only sociable, but are themselves society itself. They multiply themselves at every corner; they people in an instant the four quarters of a city; a hundred such men make more appearance than two thousand citizens; a stranger would think that they might repair the ravages

of plague and famine. It is debated in the schools whether a body can be in more than one place at once ; they are a proof of that which philosophers call in question.

They are always in a hurry, because they are engaged in the important business of asking everyone they meet whither they are going, and whence they come.

It can never be driven out of their heads that it is a part of good breeding to visit the public every day individually, without counting the wholesale visits which they make to places of general resort, which being much too brief a method is reckoned as nothing in the rules of their etiquette.

Their knocking harasses the doors of the houses more than the winds and the storms. If one were to examine the lists of all the porters, their names would be found daily mutilated in a thousand different ways in Swiss writing. They pass their lives in going to funerals, in expressions of condolence, or in marriage congratulations. The king never confers a favour on any of his subjects, without putting these gentry to the expense of a carriage to go and express their delight. At last, tired out, they return home, and rest themselves to be able to resume next day their laborious functions.

The other day one of them died of weariness ; and they put this epitaph on his tomb : " Here rests one who never rested before. He assisted at five hundred and thirty funerals. He made merry at the births of two thousand six hundred and eighty children. He wished

his friends joy, always varying the phrase, upon pensions amounting to two million six hundred thousand livres ; in town he walked nine thousand six hundred furlongs, in the country thirty-six furlongs. His conversation was pleasing ; he had a ready-made stock of three hundred and sixty-five stories ; he was acquainted also from his youth with a hundred and eighteen apophthegms derived from the ancients, which he employed on special occasions. He died at last in the sixtieth year of his age. I say no more, stranger ; for how could I ever have done telling you all that he did and all that he saw ? ”

Paris, the 3rd of the second moon of
Gemmadi, 1715.

Letter LXXXIX.

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE.

LIBERTY and equality reign in Paris. Birth, worth, even military fame, however brilliant it may be, fail to distinguish a man from the crowd in which he is lost. Jealousy about rank is unknown here. They say that the chief man in Paris is he who has the best horses in his coach.

A great lord is a man who sees the king, who speaks with ministers, who has ancestors, debts, and pensions. If he can, in addition to this, veil his indolence under an appearance of business, or by a feigned attachment to pleasure, he considers himself the happiest of men.

In Persia, we count none great except those on whom the monarch bestows some share in the government. Here there are people who are great by their birth, but they are not esteemed. The kings act like those skilful craftsmen who in executing their works employ always the simplest tools.

Favour is the great goddess of the French ; and the Minister is the high-priest who offers her many victims. Those who surround her are not dressed in white ; sometimes those who sacrifice, and sometimes the sacrifices offer themselves up to their idol along with the whole people.

Paris, the 9th of the second moon of
Gemmadi, 1715.

Letter XC.¹

USBK TO IBEN, AT SMYRNA.

THE desire of glory is in no sense different from the instinct of self-preservation common to all creatures. We seem to enlarge our existence when we are enabled to extend it to the memory of others ; it is a new life which we acquire, and which becomes as precious to us as that which we receive from heaven.

But men are as unlike in their attachment to life as

¹ This letter contains the germ of "the principles of the three governments," a theory expounded by Montesquieu in the third book of "L'Esprit des Lois."

they are in their sensibility to fame. This noble passion is always deeply engraved in their hearts ; but imagination and education modifies it in a thousand ways.

This difference which exists between man and man, is even more marked among nations.

It may be laid down as a maxim that in each state the desire of glory increases and diminishes with the liberty of the subject : glory is never the companion of slavery.

A sensible man said to me the other day, "In most things we are much freer in France than in Persia ; and so we love glory more. This happy idea causes a Frenchman to do with pleasure and inclination what your Sultan obtains from his subjects only by keeping constantly before them rewards and punishments.

"Again, among us the prince is most jealous of the honour of the meanest of his subjects. For its support there exist highly esteemed tribunals : it is the sacred treasure of the nation, and the only one which the sovereign does not control, because to do so would defeat his own interests. So that if a subject finds his honour wounded by his prince, whether by some preference, or by the slightest mark of contempt, he leaves at once his court, his employment, his service, and retires to his estate.

"The difference between the French troops and yours is this : among the latter, composed of slaves who are naturally cowards, the fear of death is overcome only by the fear of punishment, and this produces in the soul a

new kind of terror which stupifies it ; the former, on the other hand, go where the blows are thickest, and fear is driven out by a feeling of satisfaction which is superior to it.

“ But the sanctuary of honour, of reputation, and of virtue, appears to be established in republics, and in countries where one dare pronounce the word *Fatherland*. In Rome, in Athens, in Lacedæmonia, honour was the sole reward for the most distinguished services. A crown of oak or of laurel, a statue, a panegyric, was a magnificent recompense for a battle gained or a city taken.

“ There a man who had performed a brave deed thought the deed itself sufficient recompense. He could not behold one of his countrymen without a feeling of pleasure at having been his benefactor ; he reckoned the number of his services by that of his fellow-citizens. Every man is capable of benefiting another, but he who contributes to the happiness of a whole community resembles the gods.

“ Now, must not this noble emulation be quite extinct in the hearts of you Persians, with whom office and honour are derived only from the caprice of the sovereign ? Reputation and virtue are looked upon as imaginary, if unaccompanied by the favour of the prince with whom is their sole beginning and end. A man who enjoys public esteem is never sure that the morrow may not bring forth dishonour. To-day he is a general of the army ; to-morrow, perhaps, the prince makes him his

cook, and leaves him with no hope of any other eulogy than that of having made a good ragout."

Paris, the 15th of the second moon of
Gemmadi, 1715.

Letter XCI.

USBK TO THE SAME, AT SMYRNA.

FROM the general passion which the French have for glory, there has been developed in the minds of individuals a certain something which they call "the point of honour;" it is properly the characteristic of every profession, but most marked in military men—theirs, indeed, is the point of honour *par excellence*. It would be very difficult to make you understand what this is, because the idea is so foreign to us.

Formerly the French, especially the aristocracy, obeyed no other laws than those of this point of honour, and by them they regulated the whole conduct of their lives. These laws were so severe, that without incurring a penalty more cruel than death, one might not, I do not say infringe them, but even evade their slightest punctilio.

When they had occasion to arrange their differences, almost the only method of decision prescribed was the duel, which resolved all difficulties. The worst part of it, however, was that frequently the trial took place between other parties than those immediately concerned.

However little one man might know another, he had to enter into the quarrel, and pay with his person as if he himself had been enraged. He always felt himself honoured by such a choice, and a distinction so flattering; and one who would have been unwilling to give four pistoles to a man to save him and all his family from the gallows, would make no difficulty in risking his life for him a thousand times.

This method of decision was badly enough conceived; for although a man might be more dexterous and stronger than another, it did not follow that he had more right on his side.

Accordingly the kings prohibited it under very severe penalties, but in vain; ¹ honour which wishes always to reign, revolts, and regards not the laws.

On this account violence prevails amongst the French; for these laws of honour require a gentleman to avenge himself when he has been insulted; but, on the other hand, justice punishes him unmercifully when he does so. If one follows the laws of honour, one dies upon the scaffold; if one follows those of justice, one is banished for ever from the society of men: this, then, is the barbarous alternative, either to die, or to be unworthy to live.

Paris, the 18th of the second moon of
Gemmadi, 1715.

¹ By an edict of Louis XIV. duellists incurred the penalty of death.

Letter XCII.¹

USBK TO RUSTAN, AT ISPAHAN.

THERE has appeared here a person who burlesques the part of Persian ambassador, and insolently makes sport of the two greatest kings in the world. He bears to the French monarch presents which ours would not offer to a king of Irimetta or of Georgia ; and by his wretched avarice, he has disgraced the majesty of two empires.

He has brought ridicule upon himself before a people who pretend to be the most polished in Europe ; and he has caused it to be said in the west that the king of kings reigns over none but savages.

He has received honours which he would apparently have been glad to decline ; and, as if the court of France had had the grandeur of the court of Persia more at heart than he, it forced him to appear with dignity before a people who scorn him.

Say nothing of this at Ispahan : spare the head of an unhappy wretch. I would not have our ministers punish him for their own imprudence, and for the unworthy choice which they made.²

Paris, the last day of the second moon
of Gemmadi, 1715.

¹ The fourth letter added in 1754.

² The business-agent of a Persian provincial minister, in order to defray the expenses of a visit to France, pretended to be an ambassador. He was allowed to play the part for the king's amusement.

Letter XCIII.

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE.

THE monarch who reigned so long is no more.¹ He made people talk much about him during his life ; everybody is silent at his death. Firm and courageous at the last moment, he seemed to yield only to destiny. Thus died the great Shah Abbas after filling the whole earth with his name.

Do not imagine that this great event has given rise to none but moral reflections. Everyone considered his own affairs and how to take advantage of the change. The king, great-grandson of the late monarch, being only five years old, a prince, his uncle, has been declared regent of the kingdom.²

The late king left a will which limits the power of the regent. This clever prince went to the parliament, and having laid before them all the rights he has by birth, made them break the arrangements of the late monarch, who, wishing to survive himself, seemed to lay claim to govern after his death.

Parliaments are like those ruins which are trampled under foot, but which always recall the idea of some temple famous on account of the ancient religion of the

¹ Louis XIV. died at Versailles on the 1st of September, 1715, in the seventy-seventh year of his age and the sixty-third of his reign.

² The Duke of Orleans.

people. They hardly interfere now except in matters of law ; and their authority will continue to decrease unless some unforeseen event restores them to life and strength. The common fate has overtaken these great bodies ; they have yielded to time which destroys everything, to moral corruption which weakens everything, and to absolute power which overbears everything.

But the regent, anxious to secure the favour of the people, appeared at first to respect this shadow of public freedom ; and, as if he had intended to lift from the ground the temple and the idol, he was willing that the parliament should be regarded as the prop of the monarchy, and the foundation of all legitimate authority.¹

Paris, the 4th of the moon of
Rhegeb, 1715.

Letter XCIV.

USBK TO HIS BROTHER, SANTON² AT THE MONASTERY
OF CASBIN.

I HUMBLE myself in the dust before you, holy Santon ; your footprints are to me as the apple of my eye. Your holiness is so great that it seems as if you had the heart of our sacred Prophet : your austerities astonish Heaven

¹ By an edict of 16th September, 1715, ratified in Parliament, the Regent revoked those articles of the decrees of 1667 and 1673 which took from Parliament the right of remonstrance.

² A Mussulman living a conventual life.

itself ; the highest angels have watched you from the skies, and have said, " How is he still on earth, since his spirit is with us, and flies about the throne which the clouds bear up ? "

How then should I not honour you, I who have learned from our doctors that dervishes, even though infidels, have always a character of holiness which makes them venerable in the eyes of true believers ; and that God has chosen for Himself, in every corner of the earth, souls purer than the rest, whom He has separated from the impious world, that their mortifications and their fervent prayers may suspend His wrath, ready to fall upon so many rebel nations ?

Christians narrate wonders of their first santons who took refuge by thousands in the dreadful desert of the Thebaid, and whose chiefs were Paul, Antony, and Pacomus. If what is told of them be true, their lives are as full of marvels as those of our most sacred Imans. They sometimes spent ten whole years without seeing a single soul ; but they dwelt night and day with demons ; they were ceaselessly tormented by these evil spirits, who haunted their beds, and sat down with them at meat ; there was no refuge from them. If all this is true, reverend Santon, it must be confessed that nobody ever lived in more disagreeable company.

The more sensible Christians regard all these stories as a very natural allegory, which may be of use in making us realize the wretchedness of our condition as human beings. We search in vain for a state of repose in the

desert ; temptations follow us everywhere : our passions, symbolized by the demons, never quit us altogether ; those monsters of the heart, those illusions of the mind, those vain phantoms of error and falsehood, haunt us continually to mislead us, and attack us even in our fasts and our hair-cloths, that is to say, even in our strongholds.

As for me, reverend Santon, I know that God's messenger has chained Satan, and flung him headlong into the abyss ; he has purified the earth, formerly filled with his power, and has made it worthy of the abode of angels and prophets.

Paris, the 9th of the moon of
Chahban, 1715.

Letter XCV.

USBK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE.

I HAVE never heard public law discussed, without a preliminary careful inquiry into the origin of society, which seems to me absurd. If men did not unite, if they avoided and fled from each other, it would be necessary to ask the reason, and to inquire why they kept apart ; but we are all born with relations ; a son comes into the world beside his father, and stays there : that is society, and the cause of society.

International law is better understood in Europe than in Asia ; and yet it must be said that the passions of

princes, the patience of the people, and the flattery of authors, have corrupted all its principles.

At the present time this law is a science which teaches princes to what length they may carry the violation of justice without injuring their own interests. What a design, Rhedi, to wish to harden the conscience by reducing iniquity to a system, by giving it rules, by settling its principles, and drawing inferences from it !

The absolute power of our sublime Sultans, which is a law to itself, produces no greater monstrosities than this unworthy art, which would bend justice, inflexible as it is.

One would say, Rhedi, that there are two species of justice wholly different from each other : one which regulates the affairs of individuals, and rules in civil law ; another which settles the differences arising between peoples, and tyrannizes over international law ; as if international law were not itself a civil law, not indeed of a particular country, but of the world.

I will explain to you in another letter my thoughts on this subject.

Paris, the 1st of the moon of
Zilhage, 1716.

Letter XCVI.

USBEK TO THE SAME.

MAGISTRATES ought to do justice between citizen and citizen ; and each nation between itself and other nations. In this second administration of justice, no other maxims should be employed than in the first.

There is rarely need for a third party to act as umpire between nation and nation, because the subjects in dispute are almost always clearly defined and easily decided. The interests of two nations are usually so distinct, that it is only necessary to love justice to discover where it lies ; one can hardly be prejudiced in one's own cause.

It is not the same with the differences which happen among individuals. As they live together, their interests are so intermingled and so confused, and also so various, that it is necessary for a third party to clear that which the covetousness of the other two endeavours to obscure.

There are only two kinds of just wars : those which are waged to repel an attacking enemy, or to aid an ally who is attacked.

There would be no justice in making war for the private quarrels of a prince, unless the crime were so grave as to require the death of the prince or of the people who committed it. Thus, a prince ought not to make war because he has been refused an honour which is his due, or because his ambassadors have been treated with scant courtesy, or for any such reason ; any more than a private

person should kill him who refuses him precedence. The reason of this is, that, since a declaration of war ought to be an act of justice, which always requires the punishment to be proportioned to the crime, it is necessary to make sure that he upon whom war is declared merits death : for to wage war on anyone is to pronounce against him the death penalty.

In international law the severest act of justice is war, since it may have the effect of destroying society.

Reprisals are next in severity. No tribunal has been able to avoid the law which proportions the punishment to the crime.

A third act of justice is to deprive a prince of the advantages which he may derive from us, always measuring the penalty by the offence.

The fourth act of justice, which ought to be the most frequent, is to renounce the alliance of a people which gives cause of complaint. This penalty corresponds to that of banishment, which has been established by tribunals to remove criminals from the community. In this way, the prince whose alliance we renounce is cut off from our community, and is no longer one of the members which compose it.

No greater insult can be offered a prince, than to renounce his alliance, and no greater honour can be conferred upon him, than to enter into one with him. Nothing on earth adds more to our honour, and is really more useful, than to see others always careful of our preservation.

But, in order that the alliance may be binding, it must be just : thus an alliance contracted between two nations to oppress a third is not lawful ; and there would be no guilt in breaking it.

It is by no means honourable or dignified in a prince to ally himself with a tyrant. They say that an Egyptian monarch once remonstrated with the king of Samos upon his cruelty and tyranny, and called upon him for amendment ; and when he would not amend, he sent to him renouncing his friendship and alliance.

Conquest in itself does not establish a right. As long as a community holds together, it is a pledge of peace, and of the reparation of wrong ; if it is destroyed or dispersed, it is a monument of tyranny.

Treaties of peace are so sacred among men, that they seem to be the voice of nature reclaiming her rights. They are quite legitimate, when the conditions are such that both nations can preserve themselves ; without that, the nation which would perish, deprived of its natural defence by peace, may seek safety in war.

For nature, although she has fixed different degrees of strength and weakness among men, has often by means of despair made the weak equal to the strong.

This, my dear Rhedi, is what I call international law, the law of peoples, or rather, the law of right.

Paris, the 4th of the moon of
Zilhage, 1716.

Letter XCVII.

THE CHIEF EUNUCH TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

A GREAT number of yellow women from the kingdom of Visapour have arrived here. I have bought one for your brother, the governor of Mazenderan, who sent me a month ago his sublime commands and a hundred tomans.

I am skilled in women, especially as they can no longer delude me, and as my heart does not interfere with my understanding.

I have never seen beauty so regular, so perfect : her dazzling eyes lighten up her countenance, and heighten the lustre of a complexion which might eclipse all the charms of Circassia.

The chief eunuch of a merchant of Ispahan bade for her against me : but she withdrew herself disdainfully from his gaze, and seemed to invite mine ; as if to tell me that a wretched merchant was unworthy of her, and that she was destined for a more illustrious husband.

I confess to you, that I feel within me a sacred joy, when I think of the charms of this lovely person. I fancy I see her entering the seraglio of your brother : I delight myself with a foresight of the astonishment of all his wives ; the haughty grief of some ; the silent but heavier sorrow of others ; the malicious pleasure of those who have nothing to hope for, and the enraged ambition of those whose hope is not yet dead.

I travel from one end of the kingdom to the other, to change the entire face of a seraglio. What passions shall I excite ! What terrors and punishments am I preparing !

Nevertheless, in spite of this internal disturbance, outward tranquillity will be undisturbed : great revolutions will be hidden in the depths of the heart ; grief will be repressed and joy will be restrained ; obedience will be no less prompt, nor discipline less inflexible : amiability, which is always exacted, will spring from the depths of despair itself.

We have noticed that the more women we have under our care, the less trouble they give us. A greater necessity to be agreeable, less opportunity for conspiring, more examples of submission ; all this increases their fetters. They are constantly watchful of the doings of their neighbours : they seem to unite themselves with us to render themselves more dependent : they take part in our labour, and open our eyes when they are closed. What do I say ? They continually incite their master against their rivals, unaware how close at hand their own punishment may be.

But all this, magnificent lord, all this is nothing without the master's presence. What can we do with this vain show of an authority which can never be entirely imparted ? We represent, and that but feebly, only the half of yourself : we can only show them a hateful severity ; whereas you can temper fear with hope, and are more absolute when you caress than when you threaten.

Return then, magnificent lord, return to this abode, and

impress throughout it your authority. Come and alleviate despairing passions : come and remove every pretext to go astray : come to pacify complaining love, and to make duty itself pleasant : come, lastly, to relieve your faithful eunuchs of a burden which grows heavier every day.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 8th of the
moon of Zilhage, 1716.

Letter XCVIII.

USBK TO HASSIM, DERVISH OF THE MOUNTAIN OF
JARON.

OH, wise dervish ! whose inquisitive mind excels in learning, give ear to what I am about to tell you.

There are philosophers here, who, it is true, have not attained to the perfection of oriental wisdom : they have not been carried up to the throne of light : neither have they heard the unutterable words, nor felt the awful approach of divine frenzy ; but left to themselves, and deprived of these sacred miracles, they follow silently the footprints of human reason.

You would not believe how far this guide has led them. They have cleared up chaos, and have explained, by a simple mechanism, the order of divine architecture. The creator of nature gave motion to matter : nothing more was required to produce the prodigious variety of effects in the universe.

Ordinary law-givers offer us laws to regulate society—

laws, subject to change like the minds of those who make them, and of the people who obey them: those talk only of general, immutable, and eternal laws, which, without exception, are obeyed with order, regularity, and absolute exactness in the immensity of space.

And what think you, most holy man, these laws may be? You imagine, perhaps, that entering into the counsels of the Eternal, you are about to be astonished by sublime mysteries: you give up in advance all idea of understanding, and propose only to admire.

But you will soon change your opinion: they do not dazzle us by a pretended profundity: their simplicity has made them long misunderstood; and it is only after much reflection, that people have seen how fruitful they are, and how far they reach.

The first is, that every body tends to describe a straight line, unless it meets with some obstacle which diverts its course; and the second, which is but a consequence of the first, is, that every body which moves round a centre, tends to fly from it; because the further off it is, the nearer the course it describes approaches a straight line.

Here, sublime dervish, you have the key of nature: here are the fruitful principles, from which consequences are drawn which pass beyond our ken.

The knowledge of five or six truths has filled their philosophy with wonders, and has enabled them to perform almost as many prodigies and marvels as those which are told of our holy prophets.

For, in short, I am persuaded that we have no doctor who would not have been sorely troubled, if he had been told to weigh in a balance all the air which surrounds the earth, or to measure all the water which falls each year upon its surface ; and who would not have thought many times before telling how many leagues sound travels in an hour ; what time a ray of light occupies in journeying from the sun to us ; how many fathoms it is from here to Saturn ; or according to what curve a ship should be cut to make it the best sailer possible.

Perhaps if some holy man had adorned the works of these philosophers with lofty and sublime expressions ; if he had introduced bold figures and mysterious allegories, he might have made a great work, which would have ranked next to the Koran.

However, if I must tell you what I think, I never cared greatly for the figurative style. In our Koran there are a great number of trifles which always appear to me as such, although they receive distinction from the strength and liveliness of the style. At first these inspired books seemed to be only divine ideas stated in the language of mankind : on the contrary, however, one often finds in the Koran the language of God and the ideas of men ; as if by some astonishing caprice, God had dictated the words, and man had supplied the thought.

You will say, perhaps, that I speak too freely of that which is held most sacred among us ; regard it as the outcome of the independence which distinguishes this country. No ; thanks to Heaven, my mind has not

corrupted my heart, and while I live Hali shall be my prophet.

Paris, the 15th of the moon of
Chahban, 1716.

Letter XCIX.

USBEK TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA.

THERE is no country in the world where fortune is more inconstant than in this. Every ten years a revolution happens which plunges the wealthy into misery, and raises the poor on rapid wings to the summit of affluence. The one is astonished at his poverty; the other at his riches. The new-made rich man admires the wisdom of providence; the pauper, the mischance of a blind fate.

Those who gather the taxes swim in wealth; and there are few Tantaluses among them. It is the extremity of misery, however, that drives them into this employment. They are despised like dirt while they are poor; when they become rich, they are sufficiently respected, as they neglect nothing to acquire esteem.

They are at present in a dreadful situation. They are about to establish a chamber of justice, so called because it is to strip them of all their wealth. They can neither transfer, nor hide their effects; for they are compelled to render an exact account, upon pain of death; thus they have to pass through a very narrow strait, I mean between their lives and their money. To fill up the cup of their

misfortune, there is a minister, remarkable for his wit, who honours them with his jokes, and makes fun of all the deliberations of the council. It is not every day that ministers are to be found disposed to make the people laugh; and they ought to be much beholden to him for having undertaken to do so.

The body of footmen is more respectable in France than anywhere else; it is a nursery of great lords; it fills up the vacancies in other ranks. The members of it take the places of the unfortunate great, of ruined magistrates, of gentlemen killed in the fury of war; and when they are unable to find supply among themselves, they re-establish all the great families by means of their daughters, which are like a kind of manure enriching barren and mountainous soil.

I find, Ibben, the ways of providence in the distribution of wealth admirable. If riches had been granted only to good people, they would not have been sufficiently distinguished from virtue, and their insignificance would not have been fully recognized. But when we consider who are the people most loaded with them, by dint of despising the rich, we come to despise riches.

Paris, the 26th of the moon of
Maharram, 1717.

Letter C.

RICA TO RHEDI, AT VENICE.

THE caprices of fashion among the French are amazing. They have forgotten how they were dressed this summer ; they know as little how they will be dressed in the winter ; but, above all, you would never believe how much it costs a husband to dress his wife in the fashion. Where is the use of my giving you a full description of their dress and ornaments ? A new fashion would destroy all my labour as it does that of the dressmakers ; and before you could receive my letter all would be changed.

A woman who leaves Paris to spend six months in the country, returns from it as out of date as if she had been forgotten for thirty years. The son does not know the portrait of his mother, so strange does the dress in which she was painted appear to him ; he imagines that it represents some American, or that the painter wished to express a fancy of his own.

Sometimes the headdresses grow gradually to a great height, until a revolution brings them down suddenly. They grew so lofty once that a woman's face seemed to be in the centre of her anatomy ; at another time it was the feet that occupied that place, the heels forming a pedestal which raised them into the air. Would you believe it ? Architects have often been obliged to raise, to lower, or to widen their doors, according to the change in the women's dresses ; and the rules of their art have

had to yield to such caprices. Sometimes one sees upon a face an immense quantity of patches, which are all gone next day. Formerly women had figures and teeth ; now these are of no consequence. In this changeable nation, whatever ill-natured wags may say, the daughters are differently made from the mothers.

As with their fashions, so is it with their customs and style of living : French manners change with the age of the king. The monarch could even succeed in making his people solemn if he chose to try. He impresses his own characteristics upon the court, the court upon the city, and the city on the provinces. The soul of the sovereign is a mould in which all the others are formed.

Paris, the 8th of the moon of
Saphar, 1717.

Letter CI.

RICA TO THE SAME.

I TOLD you the other day of the extraordinary inconstancy of the French in their fashions. Yet it is inconceivable to what an extent they are infatuated about them ; everything is swayed by them : fashion is the rule by which they judge what is done in other nations ; whatever is foreign always seems to them ridiculous. I confess that I hardly know how to reconcile this bigoted devotion to their customs with the inconstancy which changes them every day.

When I say that they despise everything foreign, I

mean only trifles ; for in important matters they are so diffident as almost to degrade themselves. They confess with the greatest goodwill that the other nations are wiser, if you grant that they are better dressed ; they are willing to submit themselves to the laws of a rival nation, provided French wig-makers may decide, like legislators, the form of foreign perukes. Nothing seems to them more glorious than to see the taste of their cooks reigning from north to south, and the decrees of their tire-women obeyed in every boudoir of Europe.

With these noble advantages, what does it matter to them that their wisdom comes from others, and that they have derived from their neighbours everything relating to political and civil government ?

Who would imagine that the most ancient and powerful kingdom in Europe has been governed for ten centuries by laws which were not made for it ? If the French had been conquered, it would not be difficult to understand, but they are the conquerors.

They have abandoned the old laws made by their first kings in the general assemblies of the nations ; and, singularly enough, the Roman laws which have been substituted, were partly made and partly digested by emperors contemporary with their own legislators.

And, to make the borrowing complete, and in order that all their wisdom might come from others, they have adopted all the constitutions of the Popes, and have made them a new part of their law : a new kind of slavery.

Latterly, it is true, they have drawn up some provincial statutes and by-laws; but they are nearly all taken from the Roman law.

So great is the multitude of adopted, and, so to speak, naturalized laws, that it oppresses alike justice and judges. But these volumes of law are nothing in comparison with the appalling army of glossers, commentators, and compilers, a tribe as feeble by the inferiority of their minds, as they are strong by their immense numbers.

This is not all: these foreign laws have introduced formalities so excessive as to be a disgrace to human reason. It would be very difficult to decide whether pedantry has been more hurtful in jurisprudence or in medicine; whether it has played more mischief under the cloak of a lawyer, or the broad brim of a physician; and whether the one has ruined more people than the other has killed.

Paris, the 17th of the moon of
Saphar, 1717.

Letter CII.

USBK TO * * *.

THEY are always talking here of the Constitution.¹ The other day I went into a certain house, where the first person I saw was a fat man with a red face, who said in

¹ The Bull *Unigenitus*, directed against the Jansenists. (See Letter XXIV.)

a loud voice, "I have issued my charge ; I shall make no further reply to anything you may say ; but read my charge, and you will see that I have solved all your doubts. I sweated over it," he continued, pressing his brow with his hand ; "I had need of all my learning, and was obliged to read many Latin authors." "I believe it," said a man who was standing by, "for it is an admirable work ; and I altogether defy that Jesuit who comes so often to see you to write a better." "Read it, then," replied he, "and you will know more of these matters in a quarter of an hour than if I had talked to you about them for a whole day." In this way he avoided engaging in conversation and the exposure of his own incompetence. But finding himself pressed, he was obliged to leave his intrenchment, and began to utter a mass of theological nonsense, supported by a dervish who received his remarks with the utmost respect. When two men who were present denied any of his principles, he said at once, "It is true ; we have so decided it, and we are infallible judges." "But how," said I, "are you infallible judges?" "Do you not see," he replied, "that the Holy Ghost enlightens us?" "That is fortunate," I rejoined, "for from the style of your talk to-day, I perceive how much you need to be enlightened."

Paris, the 18th of the first moon of
Rebiab, 1717.

Letter CIII.

USBEK TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA.

THE most powerful states in Europe are those of the Emperor, and of the kings of France, Spain, and England. Italy, and a large part of Germany, are divided into a great number of small states, the princes of which are, properly speaking, martyrs to sovereignty. Our glorious sultans have more wives than some of these princes have subjects. Those of Italy, being less united, are most to be pitied ; their states are as open as caravansaries, in which they are forced to accommodate the first comer : they therefore require to join themselves to great princes, and share their fears with them rather than their friendship. Most European governments are monarchical, or rather are called so ; for I do not know whether there ever was a government truly monarchical ; at least they cannot have continued very long in their original purity. It is a state in which might is right, and which degenerates always into a despotism or a republic. Authority can never be equally divided between the people and the prince ; it is too difficult to maintain an equilibrium ; power must diminish on one side while it increases on the other ; but the advantage is usually with the prince, as he commands the army.

Accordingly, the power of the kings of Spain is very great ; one may say that they have as much as they desire, but they do not exercise it to such a degree as our

sultans : firstly, because they are not willing to offend the manners and the religion of the people ; secondly, because it is not in their own interests to carry things with so high a hand.

Nothing brings our princes nearer the condition of their subjects than the immense power which they wield over them ; nothing makes them more subject to reverses and caprices of fortune.

The custom which princes have of putting to death all those who displease them upon the slightest pretence, destroys the proportion which ought to exist between crime and punishment ; and that proportion, scrupulously preserved by the Christian princes, gives them an immeasurable advantage over our sultans.

A Persian who, imprudently or by mischance, draws upon himself the displeasure of his prince, is sure to die ; the slightest fault or the slightest caprice reduces him to that necessity. But if he had attempted the life of his sovereign, if he had intended to betray his towns to the enemy, he would have atoned as before by losing his life ; he runs no greater risk in the latter case than in the former.

And so, under the least disgrace, death being certain and nothing worse to fear, he naturally applies himself to disturb the state, and to conspire against the sovereign—his only remaining resource.

It is not the same with the grandees of Europe, who, when in disgrace, lose only the royal favour and goodwill. They withdraw from the court and give themselves up to

enjoy a quiet life and the privileges of their birth ; as they are seldom done to death except for high treason, they dread to commit that crime, remembering what they may lose, and how little they are likely to gain ; this is why one sees here few rebellions, and few princes who die a violent death.

If, with that unlimited power which our princes have, they did not take every precaution for the safety of their lives, they would not live a single day ; and if they had not in their pay innumerable troops to coerce their other subjects, their rule would not last for a month.

It is only some four or five centuries since a king of France,¹ contrary to the custom of the times, levied guards to secure himself from the assassins which a petty prince of Asia² had sent to kill him ; till that time kings had lived peacefully among their subjects, like fathers with their children.

Although the kings of France are quite unable, of their own motion, to take away the life of one of their subjects like our sultans, yet they carry about with them always mercy for all criminals ; that he should have been fortunate enough to behold the august countenance of his prince, is sufficient to make a man once more worthy to live. These monarchs are like the sun, which sheds everywhere heat and life.

Paris, the 8th of the second moon of
Rebiab, 1717.

¹ Philip-Augustus.

² He who was called the "old man of the mountains."

Letter CIV.

USBEK TO THE SAME.

HERE you have as nearly as I can, continuing the subject of my last letter, what a sensible European said to me recently.

“The worst course which the princes of Asia could have adopted, is to shut themselves up as they do. They desire to render themselves more venerable ; but it is royalty which they cause to be respected, and not the king ; they attach the minds of their subjects to a certain throne, and not to a certain person.

“When the power that governs is invisible it is always the same to the people. Although ten kings, known only by name, should have their throats cut one after the other, the public are sensible of no difference : it is as if they were governed by a succession of spirits.

“If the detestable murderer of our great king, Henry IV., had assassinated one of the kings of Ind, master of the royal seal, and of an immense treasure which would seem to have been amassed for him, he would peacefully have seized the reins of power, without its entering into any one’s mind to inquire after the king, his relations, and children.

“We are astonished that there is hardly ever any change in the government of eastern princes : how could it be otherwise, when we bear in mind their terrible tyranny ?

“Changes cannot be effected except by the prince or by the people : but there the princes take care to alter nothing, because, possessed of such absolute power, they have all they can have : were they to make any change it could only be to their own injury.

“As to the subjects, should one of them form any design, he cannot execute it upon the state ; it would be necessary to overturn at one blow a most formidable and unchanging power ; for this he lacks time and means : but he has only to attack the source of that power, for which all he needs is an arm and a moment of time.

“The murderer mounts the throne, as the monarch leaves it and falls expiring at his feet.

“In Europe a malcontent thinks of carrying on a secret correspondence, of going over to the enemy, of seizing some town, or of exciting foolish complaints among the people. A malcontent in Asia goes straight to the prince, amazes, strikes, overthrows : he obliterates all memory of his existence : in one moment slave and master, usurper and lawful sovereign.

“Unfortunate is the king who has only one head ! In guarding it with all his power he only shows the first upstart where to strike.”

Paris, the 17th of the second moon of
Rebiab, 1717.

Letter CV.

USBK TO THE SAME.

ALL the nations of Europe are not equally submissive to their princes : the impatient humour of the English, for instance, leaves their king hardly any time to make his authority felt. Submission and obedience are virtues upon which they flatter themselves but little. On this subject they say most amazing things. According to them there is only one tie which can bind men, and that is gratitude : husband and wife, father and son, are only bound to each other by their mutual affection, or by the services they do each other : and these various motives of obligation are the origin of all kingdoms and communities.

But if a prince, instead of making the lives of his subjects happy, attempts to oppress and ruin them. the basis of obedience is destroyed ; nothing binds them, nothing attaches them to him ; and they return to their natural liberty. They maintain that all unlimited power must be unlawful, because it cannot have had a lawful origin. For, we cannot, say they, give to another more power over us than we ourselves have : now, we have not unlimited power over ourselves ; for example, we have no right to take our own lives : no one upon earth then, they conclude, has such a power.

The crime of high treason is nothing else, according to them, than the crime of the weaker against the stronger,

simply disobedience, no matter what form the disobedience may take. Thus the people of England, finding themselves stronger than one of their kings,¹ pronounced it high treason in a prince to make war upon his subjects. They have therefore good reason to say that the precept of their Koran,² which requires submission to the powers that be, is not a very difficult one to follow, seeing that it is impossible not to do so, inasmuch as they are not enjoined to submit to the most virtuous, but to the strongest.

The English tell how one of their kings, having conquered and taken prisoner a prince who disputed his right to the crown, began to reproach him with his faithlessness and treachery, when the unfortunate prince replied, "It was decided only a moment ago which of us two is the traitor."

A usurper declares all those rebels who have not, like him, oppressed their country; and believing that where there are no judges there are no laws, he causes the caprices of chance and fortune to be revered like the decrees of Heaven.

Paris, the 20th of the second moon of
Rebiab, 1717.

¹ Charles I.

² The New Testament.

Letter CVI.

RHEDI TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

IN one of your letters you said much to me about the arts and sciences cultivated in the west. You are inclined to regard me as a barbarian ; but I am not certain that the profit derived from them recompenses men for the bad use to which they are put every day. I have heard it said that the invention of bombs alone has deprived all the nations of Europe of freedom. The princes being no longer able to trust the guardianship of towns to the citizens, who would surrender them at the first bomb, have made it a pretext for keeping large bodies of regular troops, whom they have since used to oppress their subjects.

You know that since the invention of gunpowder no place is impregnable ; that is to say, Usbek, that there is no longer upon the earth a refuge from injustice and violence.

I dread always lest they should at last discover some secret which will furnish them with a briefer method of destroying men, by killing them off wholesale in tribes and nations.

You have read the historians : think of them seriously ; almost all monarchies have been founded upon ignorance of the arts, and have been destroyed by their over-cultivation. The ancient empire of Persia may furnish us with an example at our own doors.

I have not been long in Europe ; yet I have heard sensible people talk of the ravages of alchemy. It seems to be a fourth plague, which ruins men, destroying them one by one, but continually ; while war, pestilence, and famine destroy them in the mass, but at intervals.

Of what advantage has the invention of the mariner's compass been to us, and the discovery of so many nations who have given us more diseases than wealth ? Gold and silver have been established by a general agreement as the means of purchasing all goods, and as a pledge of their value, because these metals are rare, and useless for any other purpose : of what consequence was it to us, then, that they should become more common, and that to mark the value of any commodity, we should have two or three signs in place of one ? This was only more inconvenient.

But, on the other hand, this invention has been hurtful to the countries of the New World. Entire nations have been destroyed ; and those who have escaped death have been reduced to a slavery so dreadful, that the description of it makes even a Mussulman shudder.

Happy in their ignorance are the children of Mohammed ! Their amiable simplicity, so dear to our holy Prophet, perpetually recalls to me the artlessness of the olden time, and the peace which reigned in the hearts of our first fathers.

Venice, the 5th of the moon of
Rhamazan, 1717.

Letter CVII.

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE.

YOU do not think as you say, or else your actions are better than your thoughts. You left your country to acquire knowledge, and you despise all knowledge; you go to form yourself in a country where the fine arts are cultivated, and you regard them as hurtful. May I say it, Rhedi?—I am more of your mind than you are yourself.

Have you properly considered the barbarous and unhappy condition which the loss of the arts¹ would entail upon us? There is no need to imagine it; it can be seen. There are still people upon the earth, among whom a tolerably trained monkey could live with credit; he would be almost on a level with the other inhabitants; and they would not think him a curious creature, or an odd character; he would pass as well as another, and would even be distinguished by his elegance.

You say that the founders of empires have almost all been ignorant of the arts. I do not deny that barbarians have poured over the earth like impetuous torrents, and covered with their wild armies the most civilized kingdoms; but, observe this, they learnt the arts, or made the conquered races exercise them; without that, their power would have passed away like the noise of a thunderstorm.

¹ Used by Montesquieu as inclusive of both the industrial and the fine arts.

You fear, you say, that some more dreadful method of destruction than that at present in use will be invented. No; if a fatal invention were to be brought out, it would soon be prohibited by the law of nations, and suppressed by unanimous consent. It is not in the interest of princes to make conquests by such means; they wish to gain subjects, not soil.

You complain of the invention of gunpowder and bombs; you think it strange that no place should now be impregnable—that is to say, you think it strange that wars should be brought to an end sooner to-day than they were formerly.

You must have remarked in reading history, that since the invention of gunpowder, battles are much less bloody than they used to be, because the armies are seldom intermingled.

Why, because an art is found injurious in some particular instance, should it be rejected entirely? Do you think, Rhedi, that the religion which our holy Prophet brought from Heaven is harmful, because one day it will serve to confound the unbelieving Christians?

You think that the arts enervate people, and are therefore the cause of the fall of empires. You speak of the fall of that of the ancient Persians, which was the result of their effeminacy; but this example is not by any means decisive, since the Greeks, who defeated them so often, and conquered them, were much more assiduous than they in the cultivation of the arts.

When they talk of the arts making men effeminate,

they are not referring at all to the people that work at them, since they know nothing of indolence, which of all vices weakens courage the most.

It is, then, those who enjoy the fruits of labour who are intended. But, as in a civilized country those who enjoy the products of one art are obliged to cultivate another on pain of being reduced to a shameful poverty, it follows that indolence and effeminacy are incompatible with the arts.

Paris is perhaps the most luxurious city in the world ; in it pleasure is carried to the highest pitch of refinement ; yet life there is perhaps harder than in any other city. That one man may live delicately, a hundred must labour without intermission. It comes into a lady's head that she ought to appear at an assembly in a certain dress ; from that moment fifty workmen must go without sleep, and without time to eat or drink ; she commands, and is obeyed as promptly as our monarch would be, because interest is the greatest monarch in the world.

This ardour for work, this passion for wealth, runs through every rank, from the workmen up to the highest in the land. Nobody likes to be poorer than he who is his immediate inferior. You may see at Paris a man with sufficient to live on till the end of the world, labouring constantly, and running the risk of shortening his days, to scrape together, as he says, a livelihood.

The same spirit prevails throughout the nation ; nothing is to be seen but toil and industry. Where, then, is this effeminate people of which you talk so much ?

I will suppose a kingdom, Rhedi, in which only those arts absolutely necessary for the cultivation of the land are allowed, which amount after all to a goodly number ; and that all those which minister only to pleasure or to fancy are banished ; I maintain that that state would be one of the most miserable in the whole world.

Though the inhabitants might have sufficient hardihood to do without so many things which their needs require, the people would decay daily ; and the state would become so feeble, that there would be no force too petty to overcome it.

It would be easy to discuss this in detail, and to show you that the incomes of the subjects would cease almost entirely, and consequently that of the prince. There would hardly be any exchange of goods among the citizens, and there would be an end of that circulation of wealth, and of that increase of revenue, which arises from the dependence of the arts upon each other ; each person would live upon his land, and would take from it only just enough to keep him from dying of hunger. But as this is sometimes not a twentieth part of the revenue of a state, the number of the inhabitants would diminish in proportion, until there remained of them also only a twentieth.

Consider attentively how much the revenue of industry amounts to. Land produces annually to its owner only a twentieth part of its value ; but with one pistole-worth of colour a painter will make a picture which will be worth

fifty. The like may be said of goldsmiths, of workers in wool and silk, and of all kinds of artisans.

From all this, one may conclude, Rhedi, that if a prince is to be powerful, it is necessary that his subjects should live in luxury ; he ought to labour to procure all sorts of superfluities with as much care as the necessities of life.

Paris, the 14th of the moon of
Chalval, 1717.

Letter CVIII.

RICA TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA.

I HAVE seen the young king.¹ His life is very precious to his people : it is not less so to the whole of Europe. But kings are like gods ; and as long as they live must be considered immortal. His face is majestic but pleasing ; a good education in conjunction with a happy disposition, already give promise of a great prince.

They say that one can never tell the character of the kings of the west until they have passed through the two great ordeals of selecting their mistress and their confessor. We shall shortly see the one and the other labouring to possess the mind of this one : and on that account he will become the subject of great contentions. For under a young prince these two powers are always rivals ; but they are reconciled and leagued together under an old one. Under a young prince a dervish has

¹ Louis XV., born 15th February, 1710.

a very difficult part to play ; the king's strength is his weakness ; but the other triumphs alike in both his strength and his weakness.

When I arrived in France, I found the late king altogether governed by women, although at his age I believe him to have been the one monarch in the world who had least need of them. I heard a woman say one day, "Something must be done for that young colonel ; I know his worth ; I will speak to the minister for him." Another said, "It is surprising that that young abbé should have been overlooked ; he must be made a bishop ; he is well-born, and I can answer for his morals." You must not however suppose that the women who talked in this way were favourites of the prince : they had perhaps not spoken twice to him all their lives ; which is nevertheless a very easy thing to do with European princes. But there is not a single person employed in any way at the court, in Paris, or in the provinces, who is not acquainted with some woman through whose hands pass all the favours and sometimes all the wrongs which he may wish done. These women are all in each other's secrets, and form a sort of republic, the members of which are always busy aiding and serving each other ; it is like a state within a state ; and anyone at court, in Paris, or in the provinces, who sees the activity of the ministers, the magistrates, and the prelates, if he does not know the women who govern them, is like a man who sees a machine at work, but who is ignorant of the springs that move it.

Do you think, Ibben, that a woman consents to be the mistress of a minister for love of him? What an idea! It is in order that she may lay before him every morning five or six petitions; and the goodness of these women appears in the zeal with which they serve an infinite number of unfortunate people, who obtain for them an income of a hundred thousand livres.

They complain in Persia that the kingdom is governed by two or three women: it is much worse in France, where the women govern generally, and not only usurp all authority wholesale, but retail it among themselves.

Paris, the last day of the moon of
Chalval, 1717.

Letter CIX.

USBK TO * * *.

THERE is a species of book unknown to us in Persia, and which seems to me to be very fashionable here: these are the journals.¹ Idleness feels flattered in reading them; it is so delightful to be able to run through thirty volumes in a quarter of an hour.

In most of these books, the author has not made the ordinary compliments, before the reader is in despair: he is made to enter half dead upon a subject drowned in the midst of a sea of words. This one would immortalize

¹ The French journals of the eighteenth century contained nothing but notices of new books.

himself in duodecimo, that one in quarto ; another with loftier propensities aims at a folio ; he must therefore extend his subject in proportion ; which he does without mercy, counting as nothing the trouble of the poor reader, who worries himself to death reducing what the author took such pains to amplify.

I cannot see, * * *, what merit there is in making such works ; I could do it myself quite well, if I chose to ruin my health and a publisher.

The chief fault of these journalists is, that they talk only of new books ; as if truth were always new. It seems to me that until a man has read all the old books, he has no right to prefer the new ones.

But when they lay it down as a law that they must never speak except of works hot from the press, they impose upon themselves another—which is, to be very tedious. They are very chary of criticising the works from which they make extracts, whatever their reason may be : and, indeed, what man is bold enough to wish to make ten or twelve enemies every month ?

Most authors are like poets, who will take a caning without a murmur ; but who, indifferent as to their shoulders, are so very jealous of their works, that they cannot endure the least criticism. It is necessary then to be very careful not to attack them in so sensitive a spot ; and the journalists know it well. They therefore do just the contrary : they begin by praising the matter treated of ; from this their first ineptitude they pass to the praise of the author, forced praise, for they have to do with

people who are always on the alert, ever ready to see justice done themselves, and to attack with trenchant pen a foolhardy journalist.

Paris, the 5th of the moon of
Zilcade, 1718.

Letter CX.

RICA TO * * *.

THE University of Paris is the first-born daughter of the kings of France, and very aged; for she is more than nine hundred years old; and so she dotes now and again.

I have been told that she had at one time a great dispute with some doctors about the letter Q,¹ which they wanted to pronounce like K. The quarrel grew so warm that some of the disputants were despoiled of their substance. It became necessary for parliament to put an end to it; which it did by permitting, in a solemn decree, all the subjects of the king of France to pronounce that letter according to their fancy. It was very amusing to see the two most venerable institutions in Europe occupied in deciding the fate of a letter of the alphabet!

It seems, my dear * * *, that the ablest men grow

¹ He means the dispute with Ramus.—(M.) Dr. Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée), Professor in the College Royal, wished to say *kiskis* and *kankam* instead of *quisquis* and *quanquam*. He was assassinated on the third day of the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

stupid when they get together ; and that, where you have the greatest number of wise men, there you have the least wisdom. Great bodies always pay so much attention to minor details, and idle customs, that essentials are never considered till afterwards. I have heard it said that a king of Arragon,¹ having assembled the states of Arragon and Catalonia, the first sessions were spent in deciding in what language the deliberations should be held: the dispute was lively, and the states would have broken up a thousand times, if they had not hit upon the expedient of putting the question in the Catalonian tongue, and the reply in that of Arragon.

Paris, the 25th of the moon of
Zilhage, 1718.

Letter CXI.

RICA TO * * *.

THE *rôle* of a fine lady is much more serious than one would imagine. Nothing could be more important than what takes place in the morning at her toilette among her servants: a general of an army devotes no more attention to the disposition of his right or of his reserve corps, than she gives to placing a patch which may fail, but from which she hopes or foresees success.

What mental worry, what care, to be continually reconciling the interests of two rivals ; to appear neutral to

¹ Philip III., King of Spain.

both, while she is giving herself to each of them ; and to act the part of peacemaker in all the strife she makes between them !

How she is occupied with the success and the renewal of pleasure parties, and in the prevention of all accidents that might interrupt them !

And with it all, the greatest trouble is taken, not to amuse oneself, but to appear to be amused. Bore them as much as you like, they will forgive you, so long as it is understood that they have been very merry.

Some days ago I was at a supper given by some ladies in the country. All the way they kept saying, "We must at least enjoy ourselves immensely."

We happened to be very ill paired, and were consequently very dull. "I must confess," said one of these ladies, "that we are very merry ; there is not in Paris to-day a party so gay as ours." As the wearisomeness of it all began to overpower me, a lady rallied me, and said, "Well, are we not getting on charmingly ?" "Yes," I replied, yawning ; "I believe I shall split my sides laughing." Melancholy, however, invaded all our thoughts ; and as for me, I felt myself fall from yawn to yawn into a lethargic sleep, which put an end to all my mirth.

Paris, the 11th of the moon of
Maharram, 1718.



THE GROUP OF THE "THEATRE DE L'OPERA" (1911)

Letter CXII.¹

USBEK TO * * *.

THE reign of the late king was so long that the end of it had caused the beginning to be forgotten. Now it is the fashion to occupy oneself with the events that happened in his minority; and nothing is read but the memoirs of these times.

Here is the speech which one of the generals of the city of Paris delivered at a council of war: I confess I do not see anything very remarkable in it:

“Gentlemen, although our troops have been repulsed with loss, I think it will be easy to retrieve this misfortune. I have six couplets all ready to publish, which I am certain will restore all matters to a proper balance. I have chosen some admirably clear voices, which issuing from the cavity of certain very powerful chests, will move the people wonderfully. They are set to an air which has hitherto produced quite a peculiar effect.

“If this is not enough, we can bring out a print representing Mazarin hanged.

“Fortunately for us, he does not speak French well; and he mutilates it in such a way, that his importance cannot fail to decline. We take care to make the people observe with what a ridiculous accent he speaks it.²

¹ The fifth of the letters added in 1754.

² Cardinal Mazarin, having occasion to use the phrase, “l’arrêt

Some days ago we made such sport of an absurd mistake in grammar, that it is now a joke in all the streets.

"I hope that before eight days have passed, the people will make the name of Mazarin a generic term to express all the beasts of burden and beasts of draught.

"Since our defeat, our songs about original sin have annoyed him so much, that, to save his party from being reduced to half, he has been forced to send away all his pages.

"Rouse yourselves then ; take courage, and be sure that with our hisses we shall send him packing over the mountains."

Paris, the 4th of the moon of
Chahban, 1718.

Letter CXIII.

RHEDI TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

DURING my stay in Europe, I read the ancient and modern historians : I compare all times ; I please myself with watching them pass before me as it were ; above all, my thoughts are fixed upon those great changes which have made the ages so different from each other, and the earth so unlike itself.

You have perhaps given some attention to a matter d'union," before the parliamentary deputies, pronounced it, " l'arrêt d'ignon," a slip of which the people made great fun. —(M.)

which continually occasions my surprise. How is the world so thinly peopled in comparison with what it was once?¹ How has nature lost the wonderful fruitfulness of the first ages? Can it be that she is already old and fallen into decline?

I dwelt for more than a year in Italy, where I saw nothing but the ruins of that ancient Italy, so famous in former times. Although all the people live in the towns, they are quite deserted and empty: they seem to exist only to indicate the places where those powerful cities stood of which history says so much.

Some people here pretend that the city of Rome alone contained formerly more people than one of the great kingdoms of Europe does to-day. There were Roman citizens who had ten, and even twenty thousand slaves, without counting those employed in their country houses; and as it is calculated that there were four or five hundred thousand citizens, the imagination rebels at any attempt to fix the number of the inhabitants.

In Sicily, there were formerly powerful and densely peopled kingdoms, which have since disappeared: that island has nothing more notable now than volcanoes.

Greece is so deserted that it does not contain a hundredth part of its ancient inhabitants.

Spain, once so crowded, can now show only unin-

¹ Some countries were, in Montesquieu's time, and are now, less populous than in their earlier history; but that the modern world contains fewer people than the antique one, is an assertion for which there is no proof.

habited lands ; and France is nothing compared with that ancient Gaul of which Cæsar speaks.¹

The countries of the north are sadly thinned ; and the people no longer require, as formerly, to divide themselves, and set out in swarms, in colonies, in whole nations, to seek for new abodes.

Poland and Turkey in Europe have almost no inhabitants.

We cannot find in America the fiftieth part of the men who formed the great empires there.

Asia is hardly in a better state. Asia Minor, which contained so many powerful monarchies, and such an immense number of great cities, has now no more than two or three. As regards the greater Asia, that part which is under the Turk is not more populous ; and if that part of it which is under the dominion of our kings be compared with the prosperous state in which it once was, it will be found to contain a very small part of the innumerable inhabitants which it possessed in the times of Xerxes and Darius.

As for the petty states which border these great empires, they are really deserts, such as the kingdoms of Irimetta, Circassia, and Guriel. These princes with vast territories, rule over a bare fifty thousand subjects.

Egypt is not less deficient than the other countries.

In short, I have reviewed the whole world, and found nothing but decay : I think I see the earth emerging from the ravages of pestilence and famine.

¹ In one sense true, as Cæsar's Gaul was covered with forests.

Africa has always been so little known, that one cannot speak of it so precisely as of the other parts of the world ; but, dealing only with the Mediterranean shores, which have always been known, it is plain that it has fallen away sadly from what it was under the Carthaginians and the Romans. To-day, its princes are so weak that they are the most inconsiderable potentates in the world.

After a calculation as exact as may be in the circumstances, I have found that there are upon the earth hardly one tenth part of the people which there were in ancient times. And the astonishing thing is, that the depopulation goes on daily : if it continues, in ten centuries the earth will be a desert.

Here, my dear Usbek, you have the most terrible calamity that can ever happen in the world. But we have scarcely perceived it, because it has stolen upon us gradually in the course of a great many centuries, which denotes an inward defect, a secret and hidden poison, a malady of decline, afflicting human nature.

Venice, the 10th of the moon of
Rhegeb, 1718.

Letter CXIV.

USBK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE.

THE earth, my dear Rhedi, is not incorruptible ; even the heavens are not : astronomers are eye-witnesses of their changes, which are the perfectly natural effects of the universal motion of matter.

The earth is subject, like the other planets, to the laws of motion ; it suffers within itself a continual strife among its elements ; the sea and the land seem to be for ever at war ; each moment produces new combinations.

Men, in an abode so subject to change, are likewise in an unsettled condition : a hundred thousand causes may operate against them capable of destroying them, and much more of increasing or diminishing their number.

I do not refer to those special catastrophes, so common in history, which have destroyed whole cities and kingdoms : there are general ones which many a time have brought the human race next door to destruction.

History is full of those universal plagues which have one after the other desolated the earth. They tell of one which was so violent that it blasted the very roots of plants, and made itself felt throughout the known world, as far as the empire of China ; one degree more of corruption would have destroyed, perhaps in a single day, the whole human race.

It is not two centuries since the most shameful of all diseases overran Europe, Asia, and Africa ; in a very short time it worked terrible havoc ; had it continued its progress with unchanging fury, it would have destroyed the race. Burdened with disease from their birth, and incapable of sustaining the duties of society, men would have perished miserably.

How would it have been, had the poison possessed a little more strength, as it would certainly have done, if, fortunately, there had not been found a remedy as power-

ful as any yet discovered !¹ Perhaps that disease, which attacks the organs of generation, would have ended by attacking generation itself.

But why do I talk of destruction that might have happened to the whole human race? Has it not already taken place? Did not the Flood reduce mankind to one single family?

There are philosophers who distinguish two creations : that of things, and that of man. They cannot believe that matter and created things have been in existence only six thousand years ; that during all eternity God delayed His works, and only yesterday began to use His creative power. Was it because He could not, or because He would not? But if He could not at one time, neither could He at another. It is then because He would not ; but, as time does not exist for God, if it is granted that He willed a thing once, He willed it always, and from the beginning.

However, all historians speak of a first father : they show us the origin of human nature. Is it not natural to suppose that Adam was saved from some general calamity, as Noah was, from the Flood ; and that such great events have been of frequent occurrence since the creation of the world? But all destructions have not been violent. We see many parts of the earth tired out with providing subsistence for men ; how do we know that the whole earth has not within itself general causes of debility, slow-working and imperceptible?

¹ Mercury.

It has been a satisfaction to me to give you these general ideas before replying more particularly to your letter on the decrease of mankind which has been going on for seventeen or eighteen centuries. I will show you in a succeeding letter, that moral causes, independently of physical ones, have produced this effect.

Paris, the 8th of the moon of
Chahban, 1718.

Letter CXV.

USBK TO THE SAME.

YOU ask from what cause the earth is less populous than it was formerly ; if you give the question good heed you will see that this great difference is the result of a moral change.

Things are much altered since the Christian and Mohammedan religions divided the Roman world ; these two religions have not been nearly so favourable to the propagation of the species as that of those masters of the world.

In it, polygamy was prohibited ; and in that respect it had a great advantage over the Mohammedan religion ; and it had another, and no less considerable advantage over Christianity in that it permitted divorce.

I find nothing so inconsistent as that plurality of wives permitted by the holy Koran, and the command to satisfy them in the same book. "Visit your wives," said the

Prophet, "because you are as necessary to them as their garments, and they, as necessary to you as yours." Here is a precept which renders the life of a true Mussulman very laborious. He who has the four wives established by law, and only as many more concubines or slaves, must he not be weighed down by so many garments ?

"Your wives are your tilth," the Prophet says again ; "devote yourselves therefore to your labour, work for the good of your souls ; and one day you will have your reward."

I look upon a good Mussulman as an athlete, destined to strive without respite, but who, soon weakened and overcome by his first toils, languishes even in the field of victory, and finds himself, so to speak, buried under his own triumphs.

Nature always works tardily, and, as it were, thriftily ; her operations are never violent ; even in her productions she requires temperance ; she never works but by rule and measure ; if she be hurried she soon falls into decline, and employs all her remaining strength in self-preservation, losing entirely her productive faculty and productive power.

It is to this state of debility that we are always reduced by the great number of our wives, fitter to exhaust us than to satisfy us. It is quite common among us to see a man in a very large seraglio with but few children ; the children themselves are for the most part weak and unhealthy, and share the languor of their father.

This is not all : these women, forced to be continent,

require people to guard them, who must necessarily be eunuchs ; religion, jealousy, reason itself permit the approach of no others ; there must be many of these guards, both to maintain peace within doors amid the endless quarrels of the women, and to prevent attempts from without. So that a man who has ten wives or concubines, must have as many eunuchs to guard them. But what a loss for society in this great number of men practically dead from their birth ! What depopulation must be the result !

The female slaves, kept in the seraglio to attend along with the eunuchs on this great number of women, almost always grow old there in a sorrowful virginity ; as long as they are there they cannot marry ; and their mistresses, once accustomed to them, hardly ever dismiss them.

You see how many persons of both sexes one man employs in his pleasures, causing them to die to the state, and making them useless for the propagation of the species.

Constantinople and Ispahan are the capitals of the two greatest empires of the world ; every interest should converge towards them, and people, attracted in a thousand ways, should come to them from all quarters. And yet these cities are themselves decaying, and will soon be destroyed, if their rulers do not cause to repair thither almost every century whole nations to repeople them. I will discuss this subject further in another letter.

Paris, the 13th of the moon of
Chahban, 1718.

Letter CXVI.

USBK TO THE SAME.

THE Romans did not have fewer slaves than we ; they had indeed more, but they made a better use of them.

Far from preventing by violent measures the multiplication of their slaves, they, on the contrary, favoured it to the best of their ability ; they united them in marriages, of a kind, as much as they could ; by this means they filled their houses with servants of both sexes and all ages ; and the state with a countless people.

Children which in time became the wealth of a master were born around him without number ; he alone was responsible for their upbringing and education ; the fathers, freed from that burden, followed only the inclination of nature, and multiplied without the fear of too large a family.

I have told you that among us all the slaves are employed in guarding our wives, and in nothing else ; that with regard to the state they are in a perpetual lethargy ; with the result that industry and agriculture are necessarily confined to a few freemen and heads of families, who apply themselves as little as possible.

It was not thus among the Romans. The republic made use of this nation of slaves to its own great benefit. Each had his own savings, which he owned on conditions imposed by his master ; and this hoard he employed in whatever direction his talent lay. One became a banker ;

another trafficked in cargoes ; this one took to retail dealing ; that one applied himself to some industry, or took to farming and cultivated the soil ; there was not one of them who did not give himself with all his might to increase his savings, securing for himself in the meantime comfort in his present slavery, and the hope of future liberty ; this made a diligent people and encouraged arts and industry.

These slaves, enriched by their thrift and toil, bought their freedom and became citizens. The republic was continually built up, and received into its bosom new families, in proportion as the old ones decayed.

In my future letters I shall perhaps take the opportunity to prove to you that the more men there are in a state, the more prosperous is its commerce ; I shall prove as easily, that as commerce flourishes, men increase ; these two things necessarily aid and abet each other.

Since that is so, how much must this enormous number of slaves, always busy, have grown and increased ? Industry and plenty produced them ; and they on their side produced plenty and industry.

Paris, the 16th of the moon of
Chahban, 1718.

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Letter CXVII.

USBEK TO THE SAME.

HITHERTO we have discussed only Mohammedan countries, seeking the cause why they are less populous than those which were subject to the government of the Romans ; let us now inquire what has produced this effect among the Christians.

Divorce, which was permitted in the Pagan religion, was forbidden by Christianity. This change, which appears at first of such slight importance, produced by degrees consequences so terrible, that one can hardly believe them.

This deprived marriage not only of all its sweetness, but attacked its very aim ; the desire to tighten the knot, only loosened it ; and instead of uniting hearts, as was pretended, it separated them for ever.

Into an action where all should be so free, and in which the heart ought to have so large a share, were introduced constraint, necessity, fate itself. Disgust, caprice, incompatibility of temper were not considered at all ; the intention was to fix the heart, that is to say, to fix the most changeable and inconstant thing in nature ; people, weary of one another, and almost always badly matched, were joined in an unchanging and hopeless union, as tyrants used to unite living men to dead bodies.

Nothing contributed more to a mutual attachment

than the power of divorce: husband and wife were induced to endure patiently domestic troubles, knowing that they had the power to end them; and they often retained this power all their lives without using it, from the sole reflection that they were at liberty to do so.

It is not thus with the Christians, as their present troubles make them despair of the future. They see only that the discomforts of marriage are lasting, or rather everlasting; hence arise disgust, discord, contempt, and so far a loss to posterity. Three years of marriage are hardly over when its aim is neglected; then follow thirty years of coldness; private separations take place, more enduring, and probably more baneful, than if they had been public; the couple lead divided lives, and all to the prejudice of future generations. A man is soon surfeited with one everlasting woman, and betakes himself to harlots, a commerce shameful and opposed to society, which without fulfilling the object of marriage, represents at the best only its sensual pleasures.

If, of two persons thus united, one is not suited to nature's purpose and the propagation of the species, either constitutionally or on account of age, that party buries the other along with it and renders it as useless as it is itself.

It is not a matter of astonishment, then, to see among the Christians so many marriages producing such a small number of citizens. Divorce is abolished; badly assorted marriages cannot be amended; women do not pass as with the Romans through the hands of several husbands, who in turn made the best they could of them.

I dare to say that, in a republic like Lacedæmonia, where the citizens were continually plagued by peculiar and subtle laws, and in which the state was the only family, if it had been decreed that husbands could change their wives every year, an innumerable people would have been born.

It is very difficult to understand what reason led the Christians to abolish divorce. Marriage among all the nations of the world is a contract susceptible of all kinds of stipulations, and none should be banished from it, except such as would weaken its intention ; but the Christians do not look at it in that light, and have taken much trouble to explain their point of view. They make out that marriage does not consist in sensual pleasure ; on the contrary, as I have already told you, they seem to wish to exclude that as much as possible ; with them it is a symbol, a type, and something mysterious which I do not understand.

Paris, the 19th of the moon of
Chahban, 1718.

Letter CXVIII.

USBK TO THE SAME.

THE prohibition of divorce is not the only cause of the depopulation of Christian countries : the great number of eunuchs which they have among them is another not less important.

I mean those priests and dervishes of both sexes who devote themselves to perpetual continence : this is with the Christians the virtue of virtues ; in which I fail to understand them, not perceiving how that can be a virtue which results in nothing.

I find that their learned men distinctly contradict themselves, when they say that marriage is holy, and that celibacy, the opposite of marriage, is holier still ; without considering that in matters of teaching and fundamental doctrines, the expedient is always the best.

The number of people professing celibacy is enormous. Formerly fathers condemned their children to it from the cradle ; now they dedicate themselves from the age of fourteen, which amounts to pretty much the same thing.

The practice of continence has destroyed more men than plagues and the most sanguinary wars. In every religious house we see an unending family, where nobody is born, and which depends for its upkeep upon the rest of the world. These houses are always open, like so many pits, in which future generations are entombed.

This is a very different policy from that of the Romans, who instituted penal laws against those who rebelled against marriage, and wished to enjoy a liberty so opposed to the public good.

I am only referring here to Catholic countries. The Protestant religion grants the right of producing children to everybody ; it permits neither priests nor dervishes ; and if, in the establishment of that religion, which restored everything to an earlier order, its founders had not

been constantly accused of incontinence, there can be no doubt that, after having made the practice of marriage universal, they would have lightened the yoke still further, and would have ended by removing entirely the barrier which separates, in this particular, the Nazarene and Mohammed.

But however that may be, it is certain that their religion gives the Protestants a great advantage over the Catholics.

I dare to say that, in the present state of Europe, it is not possible for the Catholic religion to exist there for five hundred years.

Before the humiliation of the power of Spain, the Catholics were much stronger than the Protestants. Little by little the latter have arrived at an equality. The Protestants will become richer and more powerful, and the Catholics will grow weaker.

The Protestant countries ought to be, and are, in fact, more populous than the Catholic ones ; from which it follows, firstly, that their revenue is greater, because it increases in proportion to the number of those who pay taxes ; secondly, that their lands are better cultivated ; lastly, that commerce is more prosperous, because there are more people who have fortunes to make ; and that, with increased wants, there is an increase of resources to supply them. When there are only people enough to cultivate the land, trade must perish ; and if there are no more than are necessary to carry on trade, agriculture must go to the wall ; that is to say, both would be ruined

at the same time, because devotion to the one can only be at the expense of the other.

As to Catholic countries, not only is agriculture abandoned, but industry itself is mischievous ; it consists only in learning five or six words of a dead language. When a man has made this provision for himself, he need not trouble himself more about his fortune ; in the cloister he finds a peaceful life, which would have cost him in the world, care and toil.

This is not all. The dervishes hold in their hands almost all the wealth of the state ; they are a miserly crew, always getting, and never giving ; they are continually hoarding their income to acquire capital. All this wealth falls as it were into a palsy : it is not circulated, it is not employed in trade, in industry, or in manufactures.

There is no Protestant prince who does not levy upon his people much heavier taxes than the Pope draws from his subjects ; yet the latter are poor, while the former live in affluence. Commerce puts life into all ranks among the Protestants, and celibacy lays its hand of death upon all interests among the Catholics.

Paris, the 26th of the moon of
Chahban, 1718.

Letter CXIX.

USBK TO THE SAME.

HAVING nothing further to say of Asia and Europe, let us pass on to Africa. We can really speak of nothing but its shores, as we do not know the interior.

The Barbary coast, where the Mohammedan religion is established, is not so populous as it was in the times of the Romans, for the reasons I have already given. As to the Guinea coast, it must be terribly depopulated, since for two hundred years the petty kings or village chiefs have been selling their subjects to the European princes for transportation to their American colonies.

A very remarkable thing about this America is, that while it receives every year new inhabitants, it is itself a desert, profiting nothing from the continual drain on Africa. Those slaves, transported into a foreign clime, perish there in thousands; and the work in the mines in which natives and foreigners are constantly employed, the poisonous vapours which issue from them, and the quicksilver which is continually in use, destroy them without remedy.

There is nothing more absurd than to cause countless numbers of men to perish in extracting from the bowels of the earth gold and silver, metals in themselves absolutely useless, and which constitute wealth only because they have been chosen as the symbols of it.

Paris, the last of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

Letter CXX.

USBK TO THE SAME.

THE fertility of a people depends sometimes on the most trifling circumstances in the world ; so that often nothing more is necessary to increase its numbers than to give a new direction to its imagination.

The Jews, always being exterminated, and always increasing again, have repaired their continual losses and destructions by the single hope, shared by all their families, that from one of them shall spring a powerful king who will be the master of the world.

The ancient kings of Persia had such an immense number of subjects, simply because of that dogma of the Magian religion which declares that the deeds of men most acceptable to God are to beget a child, to till a field, and to plant a tree.

If the population of China is so enormous, it is only the result of a certain way of thinking ; for since children look upon their parents as gods, reverence them as such in this life, and honour them after death with sacrifices by means of which they believe that their souls, absorbed into Tyen,¹ recommence a new existence, each one is bent on increasing a family so dutiful in this life, and so necessary for the next.

On the other hand, the Mohammedan countries become daily more deserted, because of a belief, all-

¹ The heaven of the Chinese.

hallowed as it is, which fails not of most baneful effects when it is deeply rooted in the mind. We look upon ourselves as travellers, who ought to think only of another country : useful and lasting works, care to make provision for our children, projects which look beyond our own short and fleeting lives, seem to us somewhat absurd. Easy minded as regards the present, and without anxiety for the future, we trouble neither to repair public buildings, to reclaim waste lands, nor to cultivate those which are suited for tillage ; we live generally in a state of indifference, and allow Providence to do everything.

It is a spirit of vanity which established in Europe the unjust law of primogeniture, so unfavourable to propagation in that it fastens the attention of the father upon one of his children, and turns his eyes from all the others, forcing him in order to make a substantial fortune for one to prevent the settlement of several ; and lastly, in that it destroys equality among citizens, which constitutes all their wealth.

Paris, the 4th of the moon of
Rhamazan, 1718.

Letter CXXI.

USBK TO THE SAME.

COUNTRIES inhabited by savages are usually thinly peopled, on account of the dislike which they almost always have for toil and tillage. This unfortunate dislike

is so strong, that when they invoke a curse against one of their enemies, they can wish him no greater evil than to be reduced to plough a field, believing that hunting and fishing are the only exercises worthy of them.

But, as there are often years in which hunting and fishing are very unproductive, they are desolated by frequent famines ; without considering that game and fish are never abundant enough in any country to support a numerous people, because animals always forsake thickly-inhabited districts.

Besides, savage hordes, each numbering two or three hundred people, separated from each other, and having interests as divided as those of two empires, cannot maintain themselves, because they have not the resources of great states, whose members are all in accord, and work together for each other's good.

There is another custom not less baneful than the first ; the cruel habit which the women have of procuring abortion, in order that their pregnancy may not make them disagreeable to their husbands.

There are dreadful laws against this crime, which are carried to excess. Every unmarried woman who does not declare her pregnancy before a magistrate is punished with death if her offspring dies :¹ shame and modesty, accidents even, are no excuses.

Paris, the 9th of the moon of
Rhamazan, 1718.

¹ By an edict of Henry II., in 1556.

Letter CXXII.

USBK TO THE SAME.

THE ordinary effect of colonies is to weaken the countries from which they are taken, without peopling those which are colonized.¹

Men ought to stay where they are : the change from a good climate to a bad one produces diseases, and others spring from the mere change itself.

The air, like the plants, is loaded with the particles of the soil of each country. It acts upon us in such a way as to fix our constitutions. When we are transported to a foreign country we become ill. The fluids being accustomed to a certain consistency and the solids to a certain arrangement, and both to a certain degree of motion, cannot put up with others, and resist a new order.

When a country is uninhabited, it is an indication of some particular defect in the nature of the soil or of the atmosphere : so that when men are removed from an agreeable clime to such a country, exactly the opposite of what was intended is done.

The Romans knew this by experience : they banished all their criminals to Sardinia, and sent the Jews there too. They had little difficulty in consoling themselves for their loss, on account of the contempt in which they held these wretched creatures.

¹ History proves the contrary.

The great Shah Abbas, wishing to deprive the Turks of the means of supporting large armies on the frontier, transported almost all the Armenians out of their own country, and sent more than twenty thousand families into the province of Guilan, where they nearly all perished in a very short time.

None of the transportations of people into Constantinople has ever succeeded.

The immense numbers of negroes already mentioned have not peopled America.¹

Since the destruction of the Jews under Adrian, Palestine has been uninhabited.

It must therefore be admitted that great depopulations are almost irreparable, because a people whose numbers are brought down to a certain point, remains there ; and if by chance it recovers itself, it must be the work of ages.

If, in a state of decay, the least of the circumstances which I have mentioned comes to pass, a people not only never recovers, but falls off daily and approaches annihilation.

The expulsion of the Moors from Spain is still as much felt as at the time it happened ; instead of the void being filled up, it grows greater every day.

Since the devastation of America, the Spaniards, who have taken the place of the ancient inhabitants, have not been able to repeople it : on the contrary, by a fatality, which I ought rather to call an instance of Divine justice,

¹ Montesquieu did not foresee the " Negro question."

the destroyers are destroying themselves, and waste away daily.

Princes ought not therefore to think of peopling large countries by means of colonies. I do not say that they are not sometimes successful; there are climes so favourable, that the human race always multiplies there: witness the isles¹ which have been peopled by some sick folks abandoned by passing vessels, and who soon recovered their health there.

But, if these colonies were to succeed, in place of increasing power, they only divide it; unless they should happen to be of small extent, like those which are occupied for trading purposes.

The Carthagenians, like the Spaniards, discovered America, or, at any rate, certain large islands with which they carried on an enormous trade; but, when they beheld the number of their inhabitants decreasing, that wise republic forbade its subjects to carry on that trade, or to sail to these islands.

I dare affirm that, if in place of sending the Spaniards into the Indies, the Indians and cross-breeds had been transported to Spain; if its scattered people had been returned to it, and supposing only half of its great colonies had been preserved, Spain would have become the most formidable European power.

An empire may be compared to a tree whose branches, if too widely spread, draw all the sap from the trunk, and are of use only to give shade.

¹ The author probably means the Isle of Bourbon.—(M.)

Nothing is fitter to cure in princes the rage for distant conquests than the example of the Portuguese and the Spaniards.

These two nations having conquered with inconceivable rapidity immense kingdoms, more amazed at their victories than the conquered peoples at their defeat, considered the means of preserving them, and chose each of them for that purpose a different method.

The Spaniards, despairing to keep the conquered nations faithful to them, took the plan of exterminating them, and of sending to Spain for dutiful subjects : never was a dreadful design carried out with greater thoroughness. A people, as numerous as all those of Europe together, was seen to disappear from the earth, on the arrival of these barbarians, who, in discovering the Indies, seemed only to have thought of discovering to mankind the utmost reach of cruelty.

By that barbarity, they held the country under their government. Judge from this what baleful things conquests are, since such are their effects. For, indeed, this horrible expedient was the only one.¹ How could they have kept so many millions of men in subjection? How could they have carried on a civil war at such a distance? What would have become of them, had they given these people time to recover from the consternation caused by the advent of these new gods, and from the terrors of their thunders?

¹ Not the only one ; there is the method by which England has retained India.

As to the Portuguese, they took an entirely opposite course ; they did not employ cruelty, and were consequently very soon expelled from all the countries which they had discovered. The Dutch favoured the rebellion of their foreign subjects against the Portuguese, and profited by it.

What prince would envy the lot of these conquerors ? Who would wish for conquests on these conditions ? One nation was soon driven out from its conquests ; the other made them into deserts, and made a desert of its own country at the same time.

It is the destiny of heroes to ruin themselves by conquering countries which they suddenly lose, or by subjecting nations which they themselves are obliged to destroy ; like that madman who wasted his substance in buying statues which he cast into the sea, and glasses which he broke as soon as bought.

Paris, the 18th of the moon of
Rhamazan, 1718.

Letter CXXIII.

USBK TO THE SAME.

THE propagation of the species is wonderfully aided by a mild government. All republics are a standing proof of this ; especially Switzerland and Holland, which, with regard to the nature of the land, are the two worst countries in Europe, and which are yet the most populous.

Nothing attracts strangers more than liberty, and its accompaniment, wealth : the latter is sought after for itself, and our necessity leads us into those countries in which we find the former.

Mankind multiplies in a country which affords abundance for the children, without diminishing in the least the parents' provision.

That very equality of the citizens which generally produces equality in their fortunes, brings plenty and vigour into all the parts of the body politic, and spreads these blessings throughout the whole state.

It is not so in countries subject to arbitrary power : the prince, the courtiers, and a few private persons, possess all the wealth, while all the rest groan in extreme poverty.

If a man is not well off, and feels that his children would be poorer than he, he will not marry; or if he does, he will be afraid of having too great a number of children, who would complete the ruin of his fortune and sink even lower than their father.

I admit that the boor or peasant, once married, will increase the race without any regard to his poverty or wealth; that consideration does not affect him : he has always a safe inheritance to leave his children, and that is his plough; so nothing withholds him from following blindly the instincts of nature.

But of what use to a state are those crowds of children which waste away in misery? They perish almost as rapidly as they are born : they never thrive : feeble and

impotent, they die retail in a thousand ways, or are carried off wholesale by those frequent epidemics which poverty and bad diet always produce : those who escape attain the age of manhood without possessing its vigour, and waste away during the rest of their lives.

Men are like plants which never flourish if they are not well cultivated : among poor people, the race declines and sometimes even degenerates.

France supplies a great proof of all this. During the late wars, the dread which all the youths had of being enrolled in the militia forced them to marry, and that at too tender an age and in the bosom of poverty. A great many children were born of these numerous marriages who are not now to be found in France, because poverty, famine, and disease carried them off.

Now if, of a kingdom so well governed as France, and with such a good climate, remarks like these may be made, what shall be said of other states ?

Paris, the 23rd of the moon of
Rhamazan, 1718.

Letter CXXIV.

USBK TO THE MOLLAH MEHEMET ALI, GUARDIAN OF
THE THREE TOMBS, AT KOUM.

To what end are the fasts of the imans, and the sackcloth of the mollahs? The hand of God has twice lain heavy upon the children of the law : the sun has obscured his

beams and seems to shine only upon their overthrow : their armies assemble to be dispersed like dust.

The empire of the Osmanli is shaken by two defeats more disastrous than it ever experienced before. A Christian Mufti supports it with great difficulty : the grand vizier of Germany ¹ is the scourge of God, sent to chastise the followers of Omar : he carries everywhere the wrath of Heaven, enraged at their rebellion and their treachery.

Holy spirit of the imans, thou weepest night and day over the children of the Prophet, whom the detestable Omar misled : thy bowels are moved at the sight of their misfortunes : thou desirest their conversion, and not their perdition : thou wouldst have them united under the standard of Hali through the tears of the saints ; and not scattered among the mountains and the deserts through terror of the infidels.

Paris, the 1st of the moon of
Chalval, 1718.

Letter CXXV.²

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE.

WHAT can be the motive of those immense gratuities which princes lavish upon their courtiers ? Is it to

¹ Prince Eugene, who defeated the Turks at Peterwardein, took Belgrade in 1717, and concluded the advantageous peace of Passarowitz in 1718.

² The sixth of the letters added in 1754.

attach them to themselves? They have gained them already as far as that is possible. And besides, should they gain some of their subjects by bribery, they would lose a great many others, impoverished by the very same means.

When I consider the situation of princes, always surrounded by greedy and insatiable men, I cannot but pity them; and I pity them still more, when they have not the strength to resist demands—always a task to those who need to ask for nothing.

I never hear talk of their liberality, of the favours and pensions which they grant, but I give myself up to a thousand reflections: a throng of ideas present themselves to my mind: it seems to me that I hear the following decree published:—

“The indefatigable courage of some of our subjects in suing for pensions, having taxed without intermission our royal magnificence, we have at length granted the multitude of requests presented to us, which hitherto have been the greatest anxiety of the throne. Some have represented to us that they have never tailed since our accession to the crown to attend our levees; that we have always seen them in our progresses as motionless as posts; and that they have raised themselves on the highest shoulders to gaze at our serenity. We have even received several petitions on the part of some members of the fair sex, who have begged to draw attention to the notorious fact that they are very circumspect in

their conversation: some very ancient dames have desired us, with shaking heads, to consider that they adorned the courts of the kings, our predecessors; and that if the generals of their armies have made the state formidable by their warlike deeds, they have made the court not less celebrated by their intrigues. And so, wishing to be bounteous to these suppliants, and to grant them all their desires, we have decreed what follows:—

“That every labourer, having five children, shall daily curtail by one fifth the bread which he gives them. We also admonish all fathers of families to decrease the share of each child in as just a proportion as possible.

“We expressly forbid all those who are engaged in the cultivation of their estates, or who rent them out in farms, to make any improvement in them of what kind soever.

“We decree that all persons engaged in base and mechanical trades, who have never attended a levee of Our Majesty, shall in future purchase clothes for themselves, their wives, and their children only once in four years: we further most strictly forbid them those little merry-makings which they have been accustomed to hold in their families on the principal festivals of the year.

“And, inasmuch as we are advised that the greater part of the citizens of our good towns are wholly occupied in providing establishments for their daughters, who have made themselves esteemed in our state only by a solemn and tedious modesty; we decree that their

fathers shall delay their marriage until, having attained the age prescribed by the statutes, they can insist on being portioned. We forbid our magistrates to provide for the education of their children."

Paris, the 1st of the moon of
Chalval, 1718.

Letter CXXVII,

RICA TO * * *

It is a puzzling thing in all religions to give any idea of the pleasures ordained for those who live well. It is easy to terrify the wicked with a long list of the torments which await them ; but who knows what to promise the virtuous. Joys seem by nature to be of short duration, the imagination can hardly picture them otherwise.

I have seen descriptions of Paradise sufficient to make all sensible people give up their hopes of it : some make the happy shades play incessantly on the flute ; others condemn them to the torture of an everlasting promenade ; while others, who represent them as dreaming on high of their mistresses below, are of opinion that a period of a hundred million years is not sufficient to overcome a taste for the pains of love.

I remember, in this connection, a story which I heard told by a man who had been in the country of the Mogul ; it shows that the Indian priests are as fertile as others in their ideas of the pleasures of Paradise.

A woman who had just lost her husband, went in due

form to the governor of the city demanding permission to burn herself ; but since, in the countries subject to the Mohammedans, they have abolished to the best of their ability that cruel custom, he refused her absolutely.

When she saw that her prayers were in vain, she flew into a transport of rage. "Look you," said she, "how you torment me ! A poor woman is not even allowed to burn herself when she has a mind to ! Did one ever see the like ! My mother, my aunt, my sisters, were all decently burned ! And, when I come to ask permission of this confounded governor, he gets angry, and begins raging like a madman."

A young bonze¹ happened to be present. "Infidel," said the governor to him, "is it you who have set on this woman to commit this folly ?" "No," said he, "I never spoke to her ; but if she believes as I do, she will complete her sacrifice ; she will perform an action pleasing to the god Brahma : she will also be well rewarded, for she will find her husband in the other world, and begin with him a second marriage." "What do you say ?" cried the woman, astonished. "I shall find my husband again ? Ah ! I will not burn myself then. He was jealous, peevish, and, besides, so old, that if the god Brahma has not brought about some improvement in him, assuredly he has no need of me. Burn myself for him ! . . . not even the end of my finger to take him from the bottom of hell. Two old bonzes who misled

¹ Bonzes are the Buddhist priests of China, whom Montesquieu seems to have confounded with the Brahmins of India.

me, and who knew what kind of life I led with him, took care to tell me nothing of this; if the god Brahma has no other present to make me, I renounce this felicity. Mr. Governor, I will be a Mohammedan. And for you," turning to the bonze, "you can, if you like, go and tell my husband that I am very well."

Paris, the 2nd of the moon of
Chalval, 1718.

Letter CXXVIII.

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *.

I EXPECT you here to-morrow: meantime I send you your letters from Ispahan. Mine bring word that the ambassador of the Great Mogul¹ has received orders to quit the kingdom. They add that the prince, the uncle of the king,² who has charge of his education, has been arrested, conducted to a castle, where he is closely guarded, and deprived of all his honours. The fate of this prince moves me, and I pity him.

I own, Usbek, that I have never beheld the tears fall from the eyes of anyone without deep sympathy: my humanity feels for the unhappy, as if they only were human; and great people even, towards whom my heart

¹ By the Great Mogul is here meant the King of Spain. His ambassador is the Prince of Cellamare, who was arrested and sent across the frontier for conspiring against the Regent with the Duke and Duchess of Maine.

² The Duke of Maine.

is hardened when they are prosperous, gain my affection in adversity.

Indeed, in the time of their prosperity what need have they of useless affection? It comes too near equality. They prefer respect, which requires no return. As soon, however, as they have fallen from their greatness, there is nothing left to recall it to them but our lamentation.

I find an admirable simplicity, and an equally admirable greatness, in the words of a prince, who, being in great danger of falling into the hands of his enemies, said to his courtiers, who stood weeping round him, "I see by your tears that I am still your king."

Paris, the 3rd of the moon of
Chalval, 1718.

Letter CXXVIII.

RICA TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA.

You have heard much talk of the famous king of Sweden:¹ while he was visiting the trenches, with an engineer as his sole companion, during the siege of a town in a kingdom called Norway, he received a wound in the head, of which he died. His prime minister² was immediately arrested, and the assembled states condemned him to lose his head.

He was accused of a very grave crime; that of having slandered the nation, and of having caused the king to

¹ Charles XII. of Sweden.

² Baron Gortz.

lose confidence in it : an offence which, in my judgment, deserves a thousand deaths.

For, in short, if it is a villainous action to blacken the character of the meanest of his subjects in the eyes of a prince, what must it be to traduce an entire nation, and to withdraw from it the goodwill of him whom providence has set over it for its welfare ?

I would have men talk with kings, as the angels talked with our holy Prophet.

You know that, in the sacred banquets, when the king of kings descends from the most sublime throne in the world to converse with his slaves, I laid a severe injunction on myself to restrain an unruly tongue : no one ever heard escape from me a single word which could be disagreeable to the meanest of his subjects. When it behoved me to cease to be sober, I never ceased to be a gentleman ; and in that test of our fidelity I risked my life, but never my virtue.

I know not how it happens, but the wickedest king is hardly ever so bad as his minister ; if he commits a vile action, it has nearly always been suggested to him : thus the ambition of princes is never so dangerous as the baseness of their advisers. But can you understand how a man who was yesterday made minister, and may perhaps to-morrow be disgraced, can become in a moment his own enemy, the enemy of his family, of his country, and of the people who are yet to be born of those he is about to oppress ?

A prince has passions ; the minister works on them :

it is in that way that he manages his ministry : that is his only aim, nor does he desire another. The courtiers mislead him by their applause ; and he flatters him more dangerously by his advice, by the designs with which he inspires him, and by the maxims which he proposes to him.

Paris, the 25th of the moon of
Saphar, 1719.

Letter CXXIX.

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *.

As I was passing the other day over the Pont-Neuf with one of my friends, he met a man of his acquaintance, who, he said, was a geometer ; and he looked it, for he was in a deep meditation : my friend had to tug at his sleeve for a long time and to shake him to bring him down to himself, he was so much occupied with a curve which had tormented him perhaps for more than a week. There was a most polite interchange of compliments, and they imparted to each other some items of literary news. Their talk continued till we came to the door of a coffee-house, which I entered with them.

I noticed that our geometer was received by everybody with marked cordiality, and that the coffee-house waiters made much more of him than of two musketeers who were in a corner. As for him, he appeared to be very well pleased with the company ; for he unwrinkled his

face a little, and fell a-smiling, as if there had not been the least particle of geometry in him.

However, his exact mind measured everything that was said in the conversation. He seemed like a man in a garden, who with a sword cuts off the head of every flower which rises above its neighbours. A martyr to his own accuracy, he was offended by a witty remark, as weak sight is annoyed by too strong a light. Nothing was indifferent to him provided it was true. Thus his conversation was very remarkable. He had come that day from the country with a man who had been to see a fine château and splendid gardens; but he himself had only seen a building sixty feet long and thirty-five wide, and a parallelogrammic grove of ten acres: he would have liked very much that the rules of perspective had been so observed that the walks of the avenues might have appeared throughout of the same width; and for that purpose he would have supplied an infallible method. He appeared to be much pleased with a dial which he had discovered there of a very peculiar make; and he became very angry with a learned man, who sat beside me, and unfortunately asked him if this dial indicated the Babylonian hours. A newsmonger spoke of the bombardment of the castle of Fontarabia; and he at once told us the properties of the line which the bombs described in the air; and, delighted with this bit of knowledge, he was quite content to be wholly ignorant of the success of the bombardment. A man complained that in the preceding winter he had been ruined by a

flood. "What you say is very agreeable to me," said the geometer. "I find that I am not mistaken in the observation which I made, and that there fell upon the earth two inches of water more than in the year before."

A moment after he left, and we followed him. As he walked very fast, and neglected to look before him, he ran full tilt against another man : they struck each other violently ; and each rebounded from the collision in proportion to his speed and weight. When they had recovered somewhat from their dizziness, this man, pressing his hand on his forehead, said to the geometer, "I am very glad you ran against me, for I have great news to tell you : I have just published my Horace." "How !" exclaimed the geometer ; "it is two thousand years since Horace was published." "You do not understand me," replied the other. "It is a translation of that ancient author which I have given to the world : I have been engaged as a translator for twenty years."

"What, sir !" rejoined the geometer ; "have you been twenty years without thinking ? You are only the mouth-piece of others." "Sir," replied the savant, "do you not think that I have done the public a great service in making them familiar with good authors ?" "I am not so sure of that : I esteem as highly as anyone the sublime geniuses whom you have travestied : but you are not as they ; for though you translate for ever, you will never be translated.

"Translations are like copper money, which have quite the same value as a gold piece, and are even of greater

use among the people ; but they are base coin and always light.

“ You wish, you say, to revive among us those illustrious dead ; and I admit that you give them indeed a body ; but you do not give the body life : the animating spirit is always wanting.

“ Why do you not engage rather in seeking for some of those glorious truths which a simple calculation discovers for us every day ? ” After this piece of advice they parted, I imagine, not in the best of humour with each other.

Paris, the last day of the second moon
of Rebiab, 1719.

Letter CXXX.

RICA TO * * *.

IN this letter I shall tell you of a certain tribe called the Quidnuncs, who assemble in a splendid garden,¹ where they are always indolently busy. They are utterly useless to the state, and half a century of their talk has no more effect than would be produced by a silence of the same length ; yet they imagine themselves of consequence, because they converse about magnificent projects and discuss great interests.

The basis of their conversation is a frivolous and ridiculous curiosity : there is no cabinet, however mysterious,

¹ The Tuileries.

whose secrets they do not pretend to fathom ; they will not admit that they are ignorant of anything ; they know how many wives our august Sultan has, and how many children he begets every year ; and, although they go to no expense for spies, they are informed of the measures he is taking to humble the Emperor of Turkey and the Great Mogul.

Hardly have they exhausted the present when they plunge into the future, and stealing a march on Providence, anticipate it in all its dealings with men. They take a general in hand, and after having praised him for a thousand follies which he has not committed, they prepare for him a thousand others which also will never come to pass.

They make armies fly like cranes, and overturn walls like a house of cards ; they have bridges on all the rivers, secret paths in all the mountains, immense arsenals in burning deserts ; they lack nothing but common sense.

A man with whom I lodge received a letter from a Quidnunc, which, as it seemed to me remarkable, I kept. Here it is :

“ SIR,

“ I am seldom mistaken in my surmises on the affairs of the day. On the 1st of January, 1711, I foretold that the Emperor Joseph would die in the course of a year : it is true that, as he was then quite well, I conceived that I would be derided, if I explained my meaning too clearly ; which caused me to employ terms

somewhat enigmatic ; but rational people understood me well enough. On the 17th of April, in the same year, he died of the small-pox.

“As soon as war was declared between the Emperor and the Turks, I went through every corner of the Tuileries in search of our gentlemen : and having gathered them together near the basin, I prophesied to them that Belgrade would be besieged and taken. I was fortunate enough to have my prophecy fulfilled. It is true that towards the middle of the siege, I wagered a hundred pistoles that it would be taken on the 18th of August ;¹ it was not taken till the day after : how tantalizing to lose by so little !

“When I saw the Spanish fleet disembark in Sardinia, I judged that it would conquer it : I said so, and it proved true. Puffed up with this success, I added that the victorious fleet would land at Final, in order to conquer the Milanese. As this opinion encountered much opposition, I determined to support it nobly : I wagered fifty pistoles, and lost again ; for that devil of an Alberoni, violating the treaty, sent his fleet to Sicily, and deceived at one and the same time two great politicians, the Duke of Savoy and myself.

“All this, sir, has disconcerted me so much, that I have resolved to continue prophesying, but never to bet. At the Tuileries formerly the practice of betting was quite unknown, and the late Count L.² would hardly permit it ; but, since a crowd of *petits-mâîtres* have got in among us,

¹ 1717.—(M.)

² The Count of Lionne.

we don't know where we are. Hardly have we opened our mouths to report a piece of news, when one of these youngsters offers to bet against it.

"The other day, as I was opening my manuscript, and fixing my spectacles on my nose, one of those swaggering blades, catching promptly at the pause between my first and second words, said to me, 'I bet you a hundred pistoles that it's not.' I behaved as if I had not heard this piece of extravagance ; and, resuming in a louder voice, I said, 'the Marshal of * * *, having learned. . .' 'That is false,' cried he. 'Your news is always extravagant ; there is an absence of common sense in all that.'

"I beg you, sir, to favour me with the loan of thirty pistoles ; for I confess that these bets have almost ruined me. Herewith I send you copies of two letters which I have written to the minister. I am," etc.

Letters of a Quidnunc to the Minister.

"MY LORD,

"I am the most loyal subject the king ever had. It was I who constrained one of my friends to undertake a scheme I had formed of a book, proving that Louis the Great was the greatest of all the princes who have deserved that title. I have been engaged for a long time on another work, which will increase the glory of our nation still further, if your highness will grant me a privilege :¹ my design is to prove that, since the begin-

¹ That is, to publish.

ning of the monarchy, the French have never been beaten, and that what historians have hitherto written of our defeats is the merest invention. I am obliged to correct them on many occasions ; and I flatter myself that I shine above all as a critic. I am, my lord," etc.

"MY LORD,

"As we have lost the Count of L.,¹ we beg you to have the goodness to allow us to elect a president. Confusion reigns at all our meetings ; and state affairs are not so thoroughly discussed as before : our young folks live without the slightest regard for their elders, and without any discipline among themselves : it is exactly like the council of Rehoboam, where the young overbore the old. We point out to them in vain that we were in peaceable possession of the Tuileries twenty years before they were born : I believe they will at last drive us out ; and that, being forced to quit these quarters, where we have so often called up the shades of the French heroes, we will have to hold our meetings in the king's garden or in some more out-of-the-way place. I am . . ."

Paris, the 7th of the second moon
of Gemmadi, 1719.

¹ The Count of Lionne.

Letter CXXXI.¹

RHEDI TO RICA, AT PARIS.

NOTHING has interested me more since my arrival in Europe than the history and origin of republics. You know that most Asiatics have not only no notion of this form of government, but that their imagination is unable to conceive the possibility of there being any other in the world than despotism.

The first governments of which we know anything were monarchical; it was only by chance, and in the course of ages, that republics were formed.

Greece, having been destroyed by a flood, new inhabitants came to people it; it drew almost all its colonies from Egypt and the neighbouring countries of Asia; and as these countries were governed by kings, the races which came from them were governed in the same way. But the tyranny of these princes becoming intolerable, they threw off the yoke, and from the ruins of so many kingdoms sprang those republics which made Greece so prosperous, and the only cultured nation among a crowd of barbarians.

Love of liberty, and hatred of kings, preserved the independence of Greece for a long time, and extended far and wide the republican form of government. The Greek cities found allies in Asia Minor; they sent thither colonies as free as themselves, which served them as a

¹ This letter contains the gist of the "Esprit des Lois."

rampart against the attacks of the kings of Persia. This is not all : Greece peopled Italy ; and Italy, Spain, and perhaps Gaul. Everyone knows that the wonderful Hesperia, so famous among the ancients, was at first Greece, regarded by its neighbours as an abode of bliss. The Greeks, who failed to find at home that happy country, went to Italy in search of it ; the inhabitants of Italy, to Spain ; and those of Spain, to Bettica or Portugal ; so that all these countries bore the name of Hesperia among the ancients. These Greek colonies brought with them a spirit of liberty derived from that delightful land. It is on this account that we hardly ever hear of a monarchy in Italy, Spain, or Gaul in these remote times. It will shortly appear that the peoples of the north and of Germany were not less free ; and if traces of kingly government are found among them, it is because the chiefs of armies or republics have been mistaken for monarchs.

All this took place in Europe, for Asia and Africa have always been oppressed by despots, with the exception of some cities in Asia Minor already mentioned, and the Carthaginian republic in Africa.

The world was divided between two powerful republics : that of Rome and that of Carthage. Nothing is better known than the beginnings of the Roman republic, and there is nothing of which we have less knowledge than the origin of that of Carthage. Of the African princes who succeeded Dido, and how they lost their power, we know absolutely nothing. The wonderful rise of the Roman republic would have been of immense benefit to

the world, if there had not existed an unjust distinction between the Roman citizens and the conquered nations ; if the governors of provinces had received less power ; if the righteous laws enacted to prevent their tyranny had been observed, and if, to render these laws of no effect, the governors had not employed the very wealth amassed by their injustice.

Liberty would seem to have been intended for the genius of the European races, and slavery for that of the Asiatics. In vain the Romans offered that priceless treasure to the Cappadocians. That mean-spirited nation refused it, and rushed into slavery with the same eagerness with which other races fly to liberty.

Cæsar destroyed the Roman republic, and subjected it to arbitrary power.

For a long time Europe groaned under the violence of a military government, and the gentle Roman sway was changed into cruel oppression.

Meantime an immense number of unknown races came out of the north, and poured like torrents into the Roman provinces : finding it as easy to conquer as to rob, they dismembered the empire, and founded kingdoms. These peoples were free, and they put such restrictions on the authority of their kings, that they were properly only chiefs or generals. Thus these kingdoms, although founded by force, never endured the yoke of the conqueror. When the peoples of Asia, such as the Turks and the Tartars, made conquests, being subject to the will of one person, they thought only of providing him

with new subjects, and of establishing by force of arms his reign of might ; but the peoples of the north, free in their own countries, having seized the Roman provinces, did not give their chiefs much power. Some of these races, indeed, like the Vandals in Africa, and the Goths in Spain, deposed their kings when they ceased to please them ; and, amongst others, the power of the prince was limited in a thousand different ways ; a great number of lords partook it with him ; a war was never undertaken without their consent ; the spoils were divided between the chief and the soldiers ; and the laws were made in national assemblies. Here you have the fundamental principle of all those states which were formed from the ruins of the Roman Empire.

Venice, the 20th of the moon of
Rhegeb, 1719.

Letter CXXXII.

RICA TO * * *.

FIVE or six months ago I happened to be in a coffee-house, where I observed a gentleman well enough dressed who had the ear of the company ; he spoke of the pleasure which life in Paris gave him, and lamented that the state of his affairs obliged him to pine away in the country. " I have," said he, " fifteen thousand livres of income from land, and I should think myself a happier man if I had a quarter of that property in money and in portable effects. In vain I put the screw on my tenants,

and burden them with the expenses of lawsuits : it only makes them less solvable ; I can never manage to see a hundred pistoles at a time. If my debts amounted to ten thousand francs, all my lands would be seized, and I would be brought to the workhouse."

I left without having paid much attention to all this talk ; but, finding myself yesterday in that quarter, I entered the same house, and there saw a solemn man, with a long pale face, who, in the midst of five or six chatters, seemed sad and thoughtful, until he suddenly burst into the conversation, and said, in a loud voice, " Yes, gentlemen, I am ruined ; I have nothing to live on, for I have at present at home two hundred thousand livres in bank-notes,¹ and a hundred thousand crowns in money ; my situation is frightful ; I thought myself rich, and here I am a beggar ; if I had only a small estate to which I could retire, I would be sure at least of a livelihood, but I have not as much land as would fill this hat."

I happened to turn my head to the other side, and saw another man grimacing like one possessed. " Who can be trusted now ? " cried he. " There is a traitor, whom I thought so much my friend, that I lent him my money ; and he has paid it back ! What abominable treachery ! Whatever he may do now, in my opinion he will always be disgraced." ²

¹ The paper of the Bank having become worthless, the holders of bills had to pay their value in cash into the Treasury.

² The depreciated paper retained in law its nominal value, so that a debtor could ruin his creditor by paying him in bank-bills.

Quite near him was a very ill-dressed man, who, raising his eyes to heaven, said, "God bless the schemes of our ministers ! May stocks rise to two thousand livres, and may I see all the lacqueys of Paris richer than their masters !" I had the curiosity to ask what he was. "He is a very poor man," they said, "with a very poor profession : he is a genealogist, and he hopes that his art will become profitable if fortunes continue to be made, and that all the *nouveaux riches* will have need of him to improve their names, polish up their ancestors, and adorn their coaches ; he imagines that he is about to make as many people of quality as he wants to, and he trembles with joy at the thought of an increased practice."

Lastly, I saw a pale thin man come in, whom I recognized for a Quidnunc before he had got seated ; he was not one of those who are sure of victory in face of every reverse, and always predict triumphs and trophies ; he was, on the contrary, a weak-kneed brother, whose news was always doleful. "Things have taken a very bad turn for us in Spain," he said ; "we have no cavalry on the frontier, and it is feared that Prince Pio, who has a large force, will fleece the whole of Languedoc." Opposite me there sat a philosopher in shabby clothes, who held the Quidnunc in contempt, and shrugged his shoulders in proportion as the other grew loud. I approached him, and he whispered to me, "You see how this fop has plagued us for an hour with his fears for Languedoc ; and I, who detected yesterday evening a spot in the sun, which, if it

increases, may throw nature generally into a state of stagnation—I have not said a word about it.”

Paris, the 17th of the moon of
Rhamazan, 1719.

Letter CXXXIII.

RICA TO * * *.

THE other day I visited a great library in a convent of dervishes, to whose care it has been entrusted, and who are obliged to admit all comers at certain hours.

On entering I saw a grave-looking man, who walked up and down in the midst of a prodigious number of volumes which surrounded him. I approached him, and asked him to tell me what books those were which I saw better bound than others. “Sir,” he replied, “I live here in a strange land, where I know no one. Many people ask me similar questions; but you can easily understand how I cannot read all these books to satisfy them; my librarian will tell you all you wish, for he employs himself night and day in deciphering all you see here; he is a good-for-nothing, and is a great expense to us, because he does no work for the convent. But I hear the refectory bell. Those who, like me, are at the head of a community, ought to be foremost in all its exercises.” With that, the monk pushed me out, shut

the door, and vanished from my sight as if he would have flown.

Paris, the 21st of the moon of
Rhamazan, 1719.

Letter CXXXIV.

RICA TO THE SAME.

YESTERDAY I returned to the same library, and met a man very different from him whom I had seen the first time. His manner was simple, his countenance intelligent, and his address most courteous. As soon as he understood my desire, he set himself to satisfy it, and even, as I was a stranger, to instruct me.

"Good father," said I, "what are those large volumes which fill all that side of the library?" "These," said he, "are interpretations of the Scriptures." "What a quantity there are!" rejoined I; "the Scriptures must have been very obscure formerly, and cannot fail to be very obvious now. Do any doubts still remain? Are there any points left in dispute?" "Any, good heavens! any!" cried he; "there are almost as many as there are lines." "Indeed!" said I; "then what have all these authors done?" "These authors," he replied, "did not search the Scriptures for what ought to be believed, but for what they themselves believed; they did not regard the Scriptures as a work containing doctrines which they were bound to accept, but as a work which might sanc-

tion their own ideas ; therefore it is that they have corrupted its meaning, and twisted every text. It is a country which all sects invade as if bent on pillage ; it is a battlefield on which hostile nations encounter each other in endless engagements, attacking and skirmishing in every possible manner.

“ Close to these you see books of asceticism and devotion ; then books of morality, much more useful ; theological tomes, doubly unintelligible, on account of the matter discussed, and the manner of treatment ; and the works of the mystics, that is to say, of passionate-hearted devotees.” “ Ah, my father ! ” said I, “ stay a moment ; tell me about these mystics.” “ Sir,” said he, “ devotion warms a heart inclined to passion, and the heat mounting to the brain, produces ecstasies and raptures. This is the delirium of devotion ; often it develops, or rather degenerates into quietism : you must know that a quietist is nothing else than a madman, a devotee, and a libertine, all in one.

“ There are the casuists, who expose the secrets of the night ; who form in their fancy all the monsters which the demon of love can produce, collect them, compare them, and make them the everlasting subject of their thoughts ; happy are they, if their hearts do not take part in them, and if they themselves do not become accomplices in the many debaucheries they describe with such simplicity and directness !

“ You see, sir, that I think freely, and tell you all I think. I am naturally artless, and more so with you who

are a stranger, desirous of information, and to know things as they are. If I wished, I could speak of all this with admiration, and be for ever saying, 'It is divine, it is worthy of all reverence, it is truly marvellous !' And there would happen one of two things : either I would deceive you, or I would lower myself in your regard."

There we stopped ; some business called away the dervish, and interrupted our conversation till the morrow.

Paris, the 23rd of the moon of
Rhamazan, 1719.

Letter CXXXV.

RICA TO THE SAME.

I RETURNED at the appointed time ; and my friend led me to the very spot we had left. "Here," he said, "are the grammarians, the glossers, and the commentators." "Father," said I, "have not all these people been able to dispense with common sense?" "Yes," said he, "they have ; and yet it does not appear, and their works are not a penny the worse, which is very convenient for them." "True," said I ; "and I know plenty of philosophers who would do well to occupy themselves with sciences of this kind."

"There," continued he, "are the orators who can convince people without employing reason ; and the

geometers, who compel a man to be convinced in spite of himself, and conquer him by sheer force.

"Here are metaphysical books, which deal with very lofty concerns indeed, and in which the infinite meets ~~one~~ at every turning; books of physics, which detect nothing more marvellous in the economy of the vast universe, than in the simplest machine of our craftsmen.

"Books of medicine, those monuments of the frailty of nature and of the power of art, which when they treat even of the slightest disorders make us tremble by bringing the idea of death home to us; but which when they discuss the power of remedies make us feel as secure as if we were immortal.

"Near these are the books of anatomy, which do not so much contain descriptions of the parts of the human body, as the barbarous names which have been given them—neither likely to cure the patient of his disease nor the physician of his ignorance.

"Here are the alchemists, who inhabit now the hospital, now the madhouse, dwellings equally suitable for them.

"Here are books of science, or rather of occult ignorance; of such are those which contain any kind of sorcery—execrable according to most people; in my opinion contemptible. Such also are the books of judicial astrology." "What do you say, father? The books of judicial astrology!" I cried with enthusiasm. "These are the books we make most of in Persia. They rule all the actions of our lives, and determine us in all

our undertakings : in fact, the astrologers are our spiritual fathers, and more, for they take part in the government of the state." "If that is so," said he, "you live under a yoke much heavier than that of reason. Yours must be the strangest of all governments: I pity from my heart a family, and above all a nation, which permits the planets to have such ascendancy over them." "We make use of astrology," replied I, "just as you make use of algebra. Every nation has its proper science, according to which it guides its policy. All the astrologers together have never committed so many follies in Persia, as a single algebraist has done here. Do you think that the fortuitous concourse of the stars is not as sure a guide as all the fine reasoning of your system-monger? ¹ If the votes on that subject were counted in France and in Persia, astrology would have good reason to triumph; you would see the schemers properly humbled, from which how disastrous a corollary might be deduced against them!"

Our dispute was interrupted, and I had to leave him.

Paris, the 26th of the moon of
Rhamazan, 1719.

¹ Law, the banker.

Letter CXXXVI.

RICA TO THE SAME.

AT our next interview, my learned instructor took me into a separate room. "Here," said he, "are the books of modern history. First of all, there are the historians of the Church, and of the Popes ; books which I read for instruction, but which often produce in me an opposite effect.

"There are the works of those who have written of the decline of the great Roman empire, which was formed from the ruins of so many monarchies, and from the destruction of which there sprang as many again. An infinite number of barbarous nations, as unknown as the countries which they inhabited, suddenly appeared, overran the Roman empire, ravaged it, cut it to pieces, and founded all the kingdoms which you now see in Europe. These races were not altogether barbarians, because they were free ; but they became so afterwards, as the most part of them, having submitted to absolute power, lost that sweet freedom, so conformable to reason, to humanity, and to nature.

"There you see the historians of the German empire, which is but a shadow of the Roman one ; but which is, I believe, the only power on earth unweakened by faction, and I believe also, the only one which grows stronger from its losses, and which, tardy in profiting by success, becomes invincible in defeat.

"Here are the historians of France, who show us to



THE TWO WOMEN

“There are the historians of the republics : of Switzerland, which is the type of liberty ; of Venice, resourceless but for its own thrift ; and of Genoa, superb only because of its buildings.

“And here are those of the north—among others, of Poland, which makes such a bad use of its liberty and of the right it possesses of electing its kings, that it would seem to be its intention thereby to console its neighbours which have lost both the one and the other.”

Thereupon we separated until next day. •

Paris, the 2nd of the moon of
Chalval, 1719.

Letter CXXXVII.

RICA TO THE SAME.

NEXT morning he took me to another room. “Here,” he said, “we have the poets ; that is to say, those authors whose business it is to shackle common sense, and to smother reason with embellishment, as women were formerly buried under their ornaments and jewellery. You must know them ; they are not uncommon in the east, where a hotter sun seems to give new heat even to the imagination.”¹

¹ Like Pascal, Montesquieu despised poetry, although he liked plays. Voltaire, having been taken to task concerning his attacks on Montesquieu, replied, “He is guilty of *lèse-poésie*.”

"There are the epic poems." "Ah ! and what are epic poems?" "Indeed," said he, "I don't know ; critics say that there were never more than two, and that the others, which go by the name, are not epics : that, too, I know nothing about. They say, besides, what is still more surprising, that it is impossible to make more.¹

"Here are the dramatic poets, which are, in my opinion, the best of all, and the masters of passion. There are two kinds : the comic dramatists, who move us so agreeably, and the tragic dramatists, who rouse our passions and shake our dispositions.

"And here are the lyric poets, whom I despise as much as I esteem the others, and who have reduced art to the production of melodious nonsense.

"Then come the authors of idylls and eclogues, which charm even courtiers, who imagine that they receive from them a feeling of serenity which they do not possess, and that they are brought face to face with the pastoral life.

"But of all the authors we have passed in review, here are the most dangerous : those, namely, who forge epigrams, little, sharp darts, which make a deep and incurable wound.

"Here you see the romances, whose authors are a sort of poets, and who are as extravagant in their wit as they

¹ M. Meyer, in his "*Études de critique ancienne et moderne*," detects here an allusion to Voltaire's "*Henriade*," the beginning of which was already circulating in manuscript. This is not impossible, as Montesquieu had no great regard for Voltaire.

are outrageous in their treatment of passion : they spend their lives seeking nature and never finding it : their heroes are about as natural as winged dragons and hippogriffs."

"I have seen," said I, "some of your romances, and if you could see ours, you would be yet more disgusted. They are as unnatural as yours, and, on account of our manners, excessively tedious ; it takes ten years of devotion before a lover may be allowed as much as to see the face of his mistress. Yet the authors are compelled to conduct their readers through these wearisome preliminaries. As it is impossible that incidents should be endlessly varied, they have recourse to an artifice worse than the evil they would remedy ; I mean the introduction of prodigies. I am sure you would not approve of a sorceress causing an army to spring out of the earth, or of a hero destroying single-handed a hundred thousand men. Yet such are our romances ; the repetition of these dull adventures tires us out, and these absurd marvels disgust us."

Paris, the 6th of the moon of
Chalval, 1719.

Letter CXXXVIII.

RICA TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA.

MINISTERS succeed and destroy each other here like the seasons; during three years I have seen the financial system change four times. To-day taxes are levied in Turkey and Persia, as they were levied by the founders of these empires; a state of affairs very different from that which exists here. It is true that we do not set about it so intelligently as the people of the west. We imagine that there is no more difference between the administration of the revenues of a prince and the fortune of a private person, than there is between counting a hundred thousand tomans and counting only a hundred; but the matter is very much more delicate and mysterious. It requires the greatest geniuses to work night and day, inventing endless new schemes with all the pains of travail; they must listen to the advice of a multitude of people, who, unasked, meddle in their affairs; they have to retire and live shut up in closets inaccessible to the great, and worshipped by the small; they must always have their heads full of important secrets, miraculous plans, and new systems; and, being absorbed in thought, it behoves them to be deprived of the use of speech, and sometimes even of the ability to be polite.

No sooner had the late king died, than they thought of setting up a new administration. They felt that things

were in a bad way ; but knew not how to bring about a better state. They did not believe in the unlimited authority of the preceding ministers ; they wished the power to be divided. For that purpose five or six councils were created, and that ministry was perhaps the wisest of all those which have governed France ; it did not last long, and neither did the good which it brought to pass.

France, at the death of the late king, was a body overcome by a thousand disorders : N * * * ¹ took the knife in hand, cut away the useless flesh, and applied some local remedies. But there always remained an internal disease. A stranger came who undertook its cure.² After many violent remedies, he imagined he had put it into good condition, whereas it had only become unhealthily stout.

All who were rich six months ago are now paupers, and those who lacked bread are rolling in wealth. These two extremities never before approached so near. This foreigner has turned the state as an old-clothes man turns a coat ; he causes that to appear uppermost which was under, and that which was above he places beneath. What unexpected fortunes, incredible even to those who made them ! God creates men out of nothing with no greater expedition. How many valets are now waited on by their fellows, and may to-morrow be served by their former masters !

The oddest things happen as a result of all this.

¹ The Duke of Noailles.

² Law.

Lacqueys, who made their fortune in the last reign, brag to-day of their birth: they avenge themselves upon those who have just doffed their livery in a certain street,¹ for all the contempt poured out upon themselves six months before; they cry with all their might, "The nobility is ruined! What a chaotic condition the state is in! What confusion of ranks! Only nameless people now make fortunes!" And these nameless ones, you may be sure, will take their revenge on those who come after them; in thirty years as people of quality they will make sufficient noise in the world.

Paris, the 1st of the moon of
Zilcade, 1720.

Letter CXXXIX.

RICA TO THE SAME.

HERE is an example of conjugal affection, wonderful in any woman, but much more so in a queen. The Queen of Sweden,² having quite made up her mind that the prince,³ her husband, should share the government with her, in order to overcome all difficulties sent to the Assembly a declaration resigning the regency, provided they elected him.

¹ Rue Quincampoix, at that time the rendezvous of stockbrokers.

² Ulrica-Eleonora, sister of Charles XII., elected Queen of Sweden by the people.

³ Frederic of Hesse-Cassel.

Some sixty years ago* or more another queen, called Christina, abdicated the throne in order to devote herself entirely to philosophy. I know not which of these two examples one ought to admire most.

Although I entirely approve of everyone maintaining himself firmly in the station in which nature has placed him, and although I cannot praise the weakness of those who, feeling themselves inferior to their position, leave it by what is little short of desertion, yet I am much struck with the magnanimity of these two princesses, which enabled the mind of the one and the heart of the other to rise superior to their fortunes. Christina aspired to knowledge at an age when others think only of enjoyment; and the other wished to enjoy her power only that she might place her entire happiness in the hands of her noble husband.

Paris, the 27th of the moon of
Maharram, 1720.

Letter CXL.

RICA TO USBEK.

THE Parliament of Paris has just been banished to a little town called Pontoise.¹ The Council ordered it to register or approve a declaration dishonouring to it; and it registered it in a manner which dishonoured the Council.

¹ The Parliament, having opposed Law's system, was exiled to Pontoise by the Regent on the 21st of July, 1720.

Other parliaments of the kingdom are threatened with similar treatment.

These assemblies are always detested ; they approach kings only to tell them disagreeable truths, and while a crowd of courtiers are never done representing to them that the people are quite happy under their rule, the parliaments come giving the lie to flattery, and carrying to the foot of the throne the tearful complaints committed to them.

When it is necessary to bear it into the presence of princes, truth, my dear Usbek, is a heavy burden ! It ought therefore to be remembered that those who do so are constrained to it, and that they never would have made up their minds to a course so disagreeable and distressing for those who undertake it, if they were not compelled by their duty, their respect, and even by their affection.

Paris, the 21st of the first moon of
Gemmadi, 1720.

Letter CXLI.

RICA TO THE SAME, AT * * *.

I WILL visit you at the end of the week. How pleasantly the time will pass in your company !

Some days ago, I was presented to a lady of the court who had taken a fancy to see my foreign figure. I found her beautiful, deserving the affection of our

monarch, and a high rank in the sacred place where his heart reposes. .

She asked me a thousand questions about the customs of the Persians, and the style of life led by the Persian women. The life of the seraglio did not appear to her taste, and she displayed repugnance at the idea of one man being shared among ten or a dozen women. She could not think of the man's happiness without envy, nor of the condition of the women without compassion. As she loved reading, above all the works of the poets and romance-writers, she desired me to talk to her of ours. What I told her redoubled her curiosity; she begged me to translate for her a portion of one of those which I have with me. I did so, and sent to her, some days after, a Persian tale. Perhaps you will be amused to see it in my translation.

In the time of Sheik Ali-Khan, there lived in Persia a woman called Zulema; she knew the whole of the sacred Koran by heart; not a dervish among them understood better than she the traditions of the holy prophets; the Arab scholars never said anything so mysterious that she could not comprehend all its meaning; and she united to all this learning a cast of mind so sprightly, that those who heard her talk could hardly make out whether she meant to amuse or to instruct them.

Once, while she was with her companions in a room of the seraglio, one of them asked her what she

thought of the next life ; and if she held to that ancient tradition of our doctors which declares that Paradise was made for men alone.

“It is the general opinion,” she said ; “nothing has been left undone to degrade our sex. There is even a race scattered throughout Persia, called the Jews, who maintain, by the authority of their sacred writings, that we have no souls.

“These most insulting opinions have no other origin than the vanity of men, who wish to carry their superiority even beyond this life, forgetting that at the last day all creatures will appear before God as nothing, and that no one will have any advantage over another except that which virtue gives.

“God will be impartial in his rewards : and as those men who have led a good life, and have made a good use of the power which they have over us here below, will be sent to a paradise full of beauties so celestial and ravishing, that were a mortal to see them, he would at once kill himself in his impatience to enjoy them ; so virtuous women will enter into a delightful abode where they will be surfeited with a torrent of pleasure in the arms of godlike men who will be at their beck : each of them will have a seraglio in which these men will be sequestered, with eunuchs, even more faithful than ours, to guard them.

“I have read,” she continued, “in an Arab book, of a man called Ibrahim, who was insufferably jealous. He had twelve exceedingly beautiful wives, to whom he

behaved in a most barbarous fashion ; he had no faith in his eunuchs, nor in the walls of his seraglio ; he kept them almost always under lock and key, shut up in their rooms, and unable to see, or speak to, each other ; for he was jealous even of an innocent friendship : all his actions were coloured by his brutal nature : a soft word was never heard to issue from his mouth ; and he never gave them the slightest attention, except to add something to the severity of their slavery.

“One day when he had them all gathered together in an apartment of his seraglio, one, bolder than the rest, reproached him with his morose disposition. ‘When one takes such strong measures to make himself feared,’ she said, ‘he always finds that he makes himself hated instead. We are so miserable that we cannot help wishing a change : others, in my place, would desire your death ; I only desire my own ; and as I can only hope to be separated from you by death, it will be all the sweeter on that account.’ This speech, which should have softened him, sent him off into a paroxysm of anger ; he drew his dagger, and plunged it into her breast. ‘My dear companions,’ said she, with her dying breath, ‘if Heaven has compassion on my virtue, you will be avenged.’ With these words, she quitted this miserable life, and entered into the abode of bliss, where women who have followed virtue, enjoy a happiness which never palls.

“At first she saw a pleasant meadow whose greenery was relieved with enamel of the brightest flowers : a

river, the waters of which were purer than crystal, rolled through it in a labyrinth of meanders. Then she entered a delightful wood, where the silence was broken only by the sweet songs of birds. Splendid gardens next opened on her view; on these nature had bestowed her simple charm as well as all her magnificence. At last she came to a glorious palace prepared for her, and filled with heavenly men destined for her delight.

“Two of them advanced to her at once and undressed her: others led her to the bath, and perfumed her with the sweetest essences: then they gave her garments infinitely richer than her old ones: after which they led her into a spacious apartment, where was a fire made of odorous woods, and a table spread with a most exquisite repast. All things seemed to unite to ravish every sense: she heard on one side a strain of lofty music, all the more so as it throbbed with passion; on the other, she beheld the dances of these godlike men, exclusively devoted to her pleasure. Yet all these pleasures were only intended to lead her by degrees to pleasures yet more entrancing. They conducted her to her chamber; and, having been again undressed, she was laid in a sumptuous bed, where two men of exquisite beauty received her in their arms. Then was she in an ecstasy of delight; her raptures exceeded even her desires. ‘I am transported,’ she said; ‘I should think myself dying, were I not certain that I am immortal. It is too much; release me; I am overcome by excess of pleasure. Ah! you restore a little tranquillity to my senses; I breathe again; I return to

myself. Why have the lights been taken away? Why can I not still contemplate your godlike beauty? Why, can I not see . . . But, what do I talk of seeing? You make me glide once more into my former transports. Sweet heavens! how soothing is this darkness! What! I shall be immortal; and immortal with you! I shall be . . . No; respite a moment; for I see that you are not likely to ask it.'

"After reiterated commands she was obeyed: but not until she seemed to wish it in good earnest. Drooping, she gave herself to repose, and slumbered in their arms. Two moments of sleep restored her strength, and she received two kisses which not only wakened her, but re-awakened her passions. 'I am uneasy,' she said; 'I doubt you love me no longer.' It was a doubt in which she had no desire to remain long, and she soon had from them explanations as complete as she could desire. 'I see my mistake,' she cried; 'pardon me, pardon me, I will never doubt you again. You say nothing; but your actions prove it better than anything you could say; yes, yes, I own it; no one was ever loved so much. But, what is this! you contest which shall have the honour of convincing me! Ah! if you vie with each other, if you join ambition to the pleasure of defeating me, I am lost; you will both be conquerors, and I, only, vanquished; but I will make you pay for your victory.'

"Day alone put an end to these delights. Her faithful and attached servants entered her chamber and caused the two young men to rise; they were reconducted by .

two old men to the rooms where they were kept for her pleasure. She then rose, and appeared before her devoted court, first in the charms of a simple undress, and afterwards apparelled in the most costly attire. The past night had increased her beauty ; it had given greater brilliance to her complexion, and a new attraction to her charms. The entire day was spent in dances, concerts, feasts, games, and promenades ; and it was noticed, that Anais withdrew from time to time, and fled to her two young heroes : after some precious moments with them, she returned to the company which she had left, the expression of her face growing more and more serene. At last, towards evening, they lost sight of her altogether : she had gone to shut herself up in her seraglio, where she wished, she said, to make the acquaintance of those immortal captives who were to live with her for ever. She therefore visited those apartments, the most retired and the most delightful, where she counted fifty slaves, miracles of manly beauty ; all night she went from room to room, receiving everywhere homage ever new, and ever the same.

“ Thus the immortal Anais passed her life, now in the midst of glittering throngs, now in solitary delight ; admired by a brilliant company, or adored by a single ardent lover : often she would quit an enchanted palace, to pass into a rural grotto : flowers seemed to spring up at her tread, and pleasures crowded round her.

“ During more than eight days she spent her time in that happy mansion, always transported, and without ever

passing a thought : she had enjoyed her happiness without knowing it, and without having had a single moment of that mental repose, in which the soul, if I may say so, takes account of itself, and listens to its own discourse in the silence of the passions.

“The pleasures of the blessed are so engrossing, that they seldom enjoy this freedom of spirit : therefore it is that, being invincibly attached to present objects, they lose altogether the memory of things past, and have no longer any thought for that which they had known or loved in the other life.

“But Anais, whose spirit was truly philosophical, had passed almost all her life in meditation : she had pushed her thought much further than one would have expected from a woman left to herself. The severe seclusion in which her husband had kept her, had left her no other enjoyment.

“It was this strength of mind which had enabled her to despise the terror that had paralyzed her companions, and death which was to be the end of her troubles and the beginning of her felicity.

“And so she recovered by degrees from the intoxication of pleasure, and shut herself up alone in a room of her palace. She gave the rein to pleasing reflection on her past condition and her present happiness ; she could not help pitying the wretched lot of her companions : one can always sympathize with the miseries which one has shared. Anais did not confine herself, however, to compassion : so kindly disposed was she

towards these unfortunate women, that she was constrained to aid them.

“She ordered one of the young men who were with her to assume the figure of her husband, go to his seraglio, master it, drive him out, and occupy his place until she recalled him.

“The execution was prompt : he cut through the air, and arrived at the door of the seraglio of Ibrahim, who happened to be away. He knocked ; every door flew open ; the eunuchs fell at his feet. He flew towards the apartments where the wives of Ibrahim were shut up. He had in passing snatched the keys from the pocket of that jealous monster, to whom he had made himself invisible. He entered, and surprised the women first by his gentle and agreeable manner ; and much more shortly after by the assiduity and the alacrity with which he embraced them. All were given cause to be astonished ; and they would have taken it for a dream had there been less of reality about it.

“While these novel incidents were passing in the seraglio, Ibrahim thundered at the door, announced himself, and stormed and shouted. After having overcome many obstacles, he entered, to the great consternation of the eunuchs. He strode on, but recoiled like one dropped from the clouds when he saw the false Ibrahim, his perfect image, exercising all the liberties of a master. He called for help, and bade the eunuchs aid him to kill this impostor : but he was not obeyed. Only one weak resource remained to him ; and that was, to refer the

matter to the judgment of his wives. In a single hour the false Ibrahim had corrupted all his judges. He was driven away, and dragged ignominiously out of the seraglio; and he would have been killed a thousand times, if his rival had not ordered that his life should be spared. Lastly, the new Ibrahim, remaining master of the field, proved himself more and more a worthy choice, and distinguished himself by feats before unknown. 'You are not like Ibrahim,' said the women. 'Say rather that that impostor is not like me,' replied the triumphant Ibrahim. 'How could anyone deserve to be your husband, if what I do is insufficient.'

"'Ah! we shall be careful how we doubt,' said the women: 'if you are not Ibrahim, it is enough for us that you have so well deserved to be him: you are more Ibrahim, in one day, than he was in the course of ten years.' 'You promise me, then,' replied he, 'that you will declare in my favour against this impostor?' 'Never doubt it,' cried they with one voice: 'we swear to be for ever faithful to you: we have been deceived quite long enough: the coward did not suspect our virtue, he suspected only his own impotence: we see clearly that men are not all made like him; it is you without doubt whom they resemble: if you only knew how much you make us hate him!' 'Ah! I will often give you new occasions for hatred,' replied the false Ibrahim; 'you do not yet know how great a wrong he has done you.' 'We judge of his iniquity by the greatness of your revenge,' they replied. 'Yes, you are right,' said the godlike man; 'I have proportioned

the punishment to the crime ; and I am very glad that you are satisfied with my method of punishment.' ' But,' said these women, ' should this impostor return, what shall we do ? ' ' It would be, I believe, difficult for him to deceive you,' replied he : ' in the relation in which I stand to you, one could hardly maintain himself by trickery : and besides, I will send him so far away that you will hear no more of him. Thereafter I shall take upon myself the care of your happiness. I will not be jealous ; I know how to bind you to me without restraining you ; I have a sufficiently good opinion of my own deserts to believe that you will be faithful to me ; if not with me, with whom would you be virtuous ? ' This conversation lasted a long time between him and these women ; the latter, more struck by the difference between the two Ibrahims than by their resemblance, were not specially desirous to have the mystery cleared up. At last, the desperate husband returned again to annoy them : he found his whole household rejoicing, and his wives more incredulous than ever. It was no place for a jealous man ; he went away mad with rage : and the moment after, the false Ibrahim followed him, seized him, carried him through the air to a distance of two thousand leagues, and there dropped him.

" Ye gods, in what a wretched plight did these women find themselves during the absence of their dear Ibrahim ! Already their eunuchs had resumed their accustomed severity ; the whole household was in tears ; sometimes they imagined that all that had happened was no

more than a dream ; they looked wistfully on each other, and recalled the slightest circumstances of these wonderful adventures. At last the heavenly Ibrahim returned more amiable than ever ; it was evident to them that his journey had not put him about. The new master took a course so opposite to that of the other, that all his neighbours were amazed. He dismissed all the eunuchs, and opened his house to everybody : he would not even allow his wives to wear their veils. It was a most extraordinary thing to see them, feasting along with the men, and as free as they. Ibrahim believed, and rightly, that the customs of the country were not made for such citizens as he. Nevertheless, he spared no expense : he squandered with a lavish hand the possessions of the jealous husband, who, on his return three years after from the distant land to which he had been transported, found nothing left but his wives and thirty-six children."

Paris, the 26th of the first moon of
Gemmadi, 1720.

Letter CXLII.

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *.

HERE is a letter which I received yesterday from a learned man : you will think it remarkable.

"SIR,

"Six months ago I inherited from a very rich uncle five or six thousand livres and a magnificently furnished man-

sion. It is delightful to have wealth, when one knows how to make a good use of it. I have no ambition, nor any taste for pleasure : I am almost always shut up in a little room, where I lead the life of a savant. It is in such a place that the diligent antiquary is to be found.

“When my uncle died, I was very anxious to have him buried with the ceremonies observed by the ancient Greeks and Romans : but at that time I had neither lachrymatories, nor urns, nor antique lamps.

“Since then, however, I have provided myself with these precious rarities. Some days ago I sold my silver plate in order to buy an earthenware lamp which had given light to a Stoic philosopher. I have disposed of all the glass with which my uncle had covered almost all the walls of his rooms, that I might possess a little mirror, somewhat cracked, which had formerly been used by Virgil : it charms me to see my own features where those of the swan of Mantua have been reflected. That is not all : I have bought for a hundred louis-d’or five or six pieces of copper money which were current two thousand years ago. I do not think I have now in my house a single piece of furniture which was not made before the fall of the Roman empire. I have a cupboard full of the most valuable and costly manuscripts. Although it is ruining my sight, I much prefer to read them than printed copies, which are not so correct, and which are in everybody’s hands. Although I hardly ever go out, that does not prevent me from having an ungovernable passion to be acquainted with all the old roads which date from the

time of the Romans. There is one near my house which was made by a proconsul of Gaul about twelve hundred years ago. When I go to my place in the country, I never fail to take it, although it is very inconvenient, and leads me more than a league out of my way : but what really angers me are the wooden posts stuck up at certain intervals to indicate the distances of the neighbouring towns. I am in despair at the sight of these signposts, wretched substitutes for the military columns that stood there formerly : I have no doubt that I shall cause them to be set up again by my heirs, and that I shall be able to leave a will compelling them to do it. If, sir, you have such a thing as a Persian manuscript, you would oblige me very much by letting me have it : I will pay you your own price, and will give you into the bargain some works of mine, from which you will see that I am not a useless member of the republic of letters. Among them you will notice a dissertation in which I prove that the crown used formerly in triumphs, was of oak and not of laurel : you will admire another in which I show clearly, by learned conjectures deduced from the weightiest Greek authors, that Cambyzes was wounded, not in the right leg, but in the left ; in another I demonstrate that a low forehead was a beauty much in request among the Romans. I will send you also a quarto volume, containing the explanation of a line in the sixth book of Virgil's *Æneid*. All these things you will receive in a few days ; and in the meantime I content myself with sending you the accompanying fragment of an ancient Greek mytho-

logist, which has not yet been published, and which I discovered in the dust of a library. I must leave you now for an important matter which I have in hand, namely, the restoration of a beautiful passage in Pliny the naturalist, which has been strangely disfigured by the copyists of the fifth century. I am," etc.

FRAGMENT OF AN ANCIENT MYTHOLOGIST.

"In an island near the Orcades, a child was born whose father was Æolus, the god of the winds, and his mother a nymph of Caledonia.¹ They tell of him that he learned unaided to count with his fingers; and that from his fourth year he distinguished metals so well, that his mother having given him a ring of tin in exchange for one of gold, he perceived the deceit, and threw it away.

"When he had grown up, his father taught him the secret of enclosing the winds in skins, which he afterwards sold to all the travellers: but as the trade in winds was not very brisk in his country, he left it, and went up and down the world, accompanied by the blind god of chance.

"During his travels he learned that gold glittered in every part of Betica;² and he hurried thither at once. He was very badly received by Saturn,³ who reigned then: but that god having quitted the earth, he judged it wise

¹ The Scotch financier, Law, of whose system this allegory is a satire.

² France.

³ Louis XIV.

to go into all the cross-roads and cry continually in a hoarse voice, 'People of Betica, you think yourselves rich, because you have silver and gold! I pity your error. Be ruled by me: leave the land of the base metals; come into the empire of the imagination, and I promise you riches which will astonish even you.' He immediately opened a great number of the skins which he had brought with him, and dealt out his merchandise to all who wished it.

"Next morning he returned to the same cross-roads, and cried, 'People of Betica, would you be rich? Imagine that I am very rich, and that you are very rich: get yourselves into the belief every morning that your fortune has been doubled during the night: rise, then, and if you have any creditors, go and pay them with what you have imagined, and tell them to imagine in their turn.'

"A few days after he appeared again, and spoke as follows: 'People of Betica, I perceive that your imagination is weaker than it was a day or two ago; try to bring it up to the strength of mine: I will place before you every morning a bill, which will be the source of wealth for you: you will see only four words,¹ but they will be of the highest significance, as they will settle the portions of your wives, the fortunes of your children, and the number of your domestics. And, as for you'—addressing those of the crowd who were nearest him—'as for

¹ *Le cours des actions*, the price of shares.

you, my dear children (I may call you by that name, since you have received from me a second birth), my bill shall decide as to the magnificence of your equipages, the splendour of your feasts, and the number and pensions of your mistresses.’

“Some days later he came into the street, quite out of breath, and cried out in a violent passion, ‘People of Betica, I counselled you to imagine, but you have not done so: well then, I now command you to imagine.’ With that he left them abruptly; but on second thoughts retraced his steps. ‘I understand that some of you are odious enough to keep your gold and silver. For the silver, let it go: but the gold . . . the gold . . . Ah! that stirs my anger! . . . I swear, by my sacred wind-bags, that if you do not bring it to me, I will inflict dire punishment upon you.’¹ Then he added, in the most seductive manner imaginable, ‘Do you think it is to keep these wretched metals that I ask them from you? A proof of my good faith is, that when you brought me them some days ago, I gave you back at once one half.’²

“Next day, he kept at some distance, and endeavoured with soft and flattering voice to worm himself into their favour. ‘People of Betica, I learn that a portion of your wealth is in foreign countries: I beg you to have it sent

¹ It had been decreed that all specie should be taken to the Bank.

² At the beginning of Law’s “system,” claims on the Bank were paid half in paper and half in cash.

to me;¹ it will oblige me very much, and I will never forget your kindness.'

"The son of Æolus was addressing people who were in no mood to be amused, yet they could not restrain their laughter; which caused him to slink away in a shamefaced manner. But, his courage having returned, he risked another little petition. 'I know that you have precious stones: in the name of Jupiter, get rid of them; nothing will so impoverish you as things of that kind; get rid of them, I tell you.'² Should you be unable to do so yourselves, I can provide excellent agents. What wealth will pour in upon you, if you follow my advice! Yes, I promise you the very best my windbags contain.'

"Then he got up on a platform, and, in a more resolute tone, said, 'People of Betica, I have compared the happy condition in which you now are with that in which I found you when I first came here; I behold you the richest people in the world: but, in order to crown your good fortune, allow me to deprive you of the half of your wealth.' With these words, the son of Æolus soared away on rapid wings, and left his audience dumb with amazement, a result which brought him back next day, when he spoke as follows: 'I perceived yesterday that my speech displeased you very much. Very well! suppose that I have said nothing at all as yet. It is quite true; one half is too much. We must find some other expedient to arrive at the result which I have proposed.

¹ A royal order, issued 20th June, 1720.

² A decree of the 4th of July, 1720.

Let us gather all our wealth into one place ; we can do so easily, because it does not occupy much space.' Immediately three-quarters of their wealth had disappeared."¹

Paris, the 9th of the moon of
Chahban, 1720.

Letter CXLIII.

RICA TO NATHANIEL LEVI, JEWISH PHYSICIAN AT
LEGHORN.

YOU ask me what I think of the virtues of amulets, and the power of talismans. Why do you address yourself to me? You are a Jew and I am a Mohammedan, that is to say, two very superstitious people.

I carry about with me always two thousand passages from the holy Koran : on my arms I fasten a little slip on which are written the names of more than two hundred dervishes : the names of Hali, of Fatima, and of all the saintliest ones, are hidden in my clothes in more than twenty places.

However, I do not disapprove of those who refuse to believe in the power ascribed to certain words. We find it more difficult to reply to their arguments, than they to our experience. I carry about me all these sacred scraps through long habit, and in order to conform to a universal practice : I am certain that if they do not possess more virtue than the rings and other ornaments with

¹ A decree of the 15th September 1720.

which we deck ourselves, they have at least as much. You, on the other hand, place your entire confidence in some mysterious letters ; and without that safeguard would be in perpetual dread.

Men are most unfortunate beings. They hover constantly between false hopes and ridiculous fears : and instead of relying on reason, make themselves monsters to terrify them, or phantoms to mislead them.

What effect do you think can be produced by an arrangement of certain letters ? What evil effect can their derangement produce ? What connection have they with the winds that they should calm tempests ; with gunpowder, that they should overcome its force ; with peccant humours, as doctors call them, and the morbid cause of diseases, that they should cure them ?

What is most extraordinary, is, that those who tire out their minds endeavouring to show the connection between certain events and occult powers, are forced to take as much trouble again to keep themselves from perceiving the true cause.

You will tell me that a battle was gained by means of certain spells ; whereas I hold that you must be blind, not to see that the situation of the field, the number or courage of the soldiers, the experience of the captains, are sufficient to produce that effect, of which you wilfully ignore the true cause.

I will grant for a moment that spells may exist : grant in your turn, for a moment, that they may not ; which is far from impossible. What you grant me will not prevent

two armies from encountering each other in battle: would you hold in that case that neither could defeat the other?

Do you believe that the battle will remain dubious until an invisible power comes to decide it? that every blow will be thrown away; all strategy in vain; and all courage useless?

Do you imagine that death, present on such occasions in a thousand forms, cannot produce in the minds of men those wild panics which you have such difficulty in explaining? Will you have it that in an army of a hundred thousand men there may not be a single coward? Do you think that the discouragement of such a one may not produce discouragement in another? that the second influencing a third, would soon make him produce a like effect upon a fourth? No more would be necessary to cause a whole army to be suddenly seized with despair, and the larger the army, the more sudden the seizure.

The whole world knows and feels that men, like all creatures actuated by self-preservation, are passionately attached to life: this is known to be the general rule; and yet people ask why on a particular occasion, they should fear to lose it.

Although the holy writings of all nations abound with accounts of these wild and supernatural panics, I can imagine nothing more ridiculous; because, to be certain that an effect which may be produced in a hundred thousand natural ways is supernatural, would require first of all

proof positive that none of these causes had operated ; which is impossible.

But I shall say no more about it, Nathaniel ; it seems to me that it is not a subject deserving such serious treatment.

Paris, the 20th of the moon of
Chahban, 1720.

P.S.—As I was concluding, I heard them crying in the streets a letter from a country physician to one in Paris (for here every trifle is printed, published, and bought). I believe it is worth while sending it to you because it has some bearing on our subject.

LETTER FROM A COUNTRY PHYSICIAN TO A
PHYSICIAN OF PARIS.

“ There was once in our town a sick person who had had no sleep for thirty-five days. His physician ordered him opium ; but he could not make up his mind to take it, and when he had the cup in his hand he was less inclined than ever. At last, he said to his physician, ‘ Sir, give me only till to-morrow : I know a man who, although he does not practise medicine, has in his house an immense number of cures for insomnia ; let me send for him : and if I do not sleep to-night, I promise to return to you.’ The physician being dismissed, the sick man had his curtains closed, and said to his page, ‘ Go to M. Anis and ask him to come to me.’ When M. Anis came the patient said to him, ‘ My dear sir, I am dying ;

I can't sleep : have you not in your shop the C. of the G.,¹ or some other book of devotion written by an R. P. J.,² which you have not been able to sell, for long-kept remedies are often the best ?' 'Sir,' replied the bookseller, 'I have the *Holy Court* of Father Caussin,³ in six volumes, at your service ; I will send it to you ; and I hope you will be the better of it. If you would prefer the works of the reverend Father Rodrigo, a Spanish Jesuit, you need not want them. But, believe me, you had better stick to Father Caussin ; I trust, with the help of God, that a single sentence of Father Caussin's will do you more good than a whole page of the C. of the G.' With that M. Anis left, and went to his shop to get the remedy. The *Holy Court* arrived ; and the dust having been shaken off it, the son of the sick man, a schoolboy, began to read it : he was the first to feel its effects ; at the second page, his utterance began to be almost inarticulate, and already the whole company was growing drowsy ; in a moment, everybody was snoring except the sick man, who, after having stood it a good while, was at last overcome, too.

"The physician arrived early next' morning. 'Weil,' he said, 'has my opiate been taken ?' Nobody answered him : the sick man's wife, daughter, and little boy, radiant with joy, showed him Father Caussin. He asked what it was. They answered, 'Long life to Father Caussin ; we

¹ "*La Connaissance du Globe*," according to the early editors.

² *Révérénd père Jésuite*.

³ A Jesuit, born at Troyes. He was the confessor of Louis XIII., and was exiled by Richelieu.

must send him to be bound. Who would have said it? Who would have thought it? It is a miracle. Look, sir, look! here is Father Caussin; it is this book which has given my father sleep.' And thereupon they explained the matter to him as it had happened.

"The physician was a skilful man, versed in the mysteries of the Cabala, and in the power of words and spirits. He was much struck, and, after deep thought, resolved to change his practice entirely. 'Here is indeed a notable fact!' said he. 'It is a new experience; and I must experiment further. And why should a spirit not be able to transmit to its work the same qualities which itself possesses? Do we not see it every day? At least it is well worth the trying. I am tired of the apothecaries; their syrups, their juleps, and all their galenical drugs destroy the health and the lives of their patients. Let us change the method, and try the power of the spirits.' With this idea, he drafted a new system of pharmacy, as you will see by the description which I am about to give you of the principal remedies which he employed.

"A Light Purgative.

"Take three leaves of Aristotle's logic in Greek; two leaves of a treatise on scholastic theology, the keener the better, as, for example, that of the subtle Scotus; four of Paracelsus; one of Avicenna; six of Averroes; three of Porphyry; as many of Plotinus, and as many of Jamblicus. Infuse the whole for twenty-four hours, and take four doses a day.

" A Stronger Purgative.

"Take ten A * * * of the C * * *, concerning the B * * * and the C * * * of the I * * *;¹ distil them in a water-bath; dilute a drop of the bitter and pungent product in a glass of common water; swallow the whole with confidence.

" An Emetic.

"Take six harangues; any dozen funeral orations, carefully excepting those of M. of N.;² a collection of new operas; fifty novels; thirty new memoirs. Put the whole in a large flask; leave it to settle for two days; then distil it on a sand-bath. And if all this should be insufficient, here is,

" Another More Powerful Emetic.

"Take a leaf of marbled paper which has served as cover to a collection of the pieces of the J. F.;³ infuse it for three minutes; warm a spoonful of the infusion, and drink it off.

¹ Ten Decrees (Arrêts) of the Council, concerning the Bank and the Company of the Indies; or, according to the earlier editors, concerning the Bull and the Constitution of the Jesuits.

² Fléchier, Bishop of Nîmes (*Monsieur de Nîmes*).

³ The "Jeux Floraux," established in 1324 by the magistrates of Toulouse to revive the decaying art of the troubadours.

“ A Very Simple Cure for Asthma.

“ Read all the works of the reverend Father Maimbourg,¹ formerly a Jesuit, taking care to pause only at the end of each sentence ; and you will gradually find your power of breathing return to you so completely, that you will have no need to repeat the cure.

*“ An Antidote for the Itch, Rashes, Scald-head,
and Farcy.*

“ Take three of Aristotle’s categories, two metaphysical degrees, one distinction, six lines of Chapelain, one phrase from the letters of the Abbé of Saint-Cyran ; write them all on a piece of paper, fold it up, tie it to a ribbon, and carry it round your neck.

“ *Miraculum chymicum, de violenta fermentatione, cum fumo, igne, et flamma.*

“ Misce Quesnellianam infusionem, cum infusione Lallemanianâ ; fiat fermentatio cum magna vi, impetu et tonitru, acidio pugnantibus, et invicem penetrantibus alcalinos sales ; fiet evaporatio ardentium spirituum. Pone liquorem fermentatum in alembico ; nihil inde extrahes, et nihil invenies, nisi caput mortuum.

¹ Louis Maimbourg, expelled from the Company of Jesus in 1685 for having defended the liberties of the Gallican Church in his “*Traité historique de l’Église de Rome.*”

" Lenitivum.

"Recipe Molinæ anodine chartas duas; Escobaris relaxativi paginas sex; Vasquii emollientis folium unum; infunde in aquæ communis lib. iiij. Ad consumptionem dimidiæ partis colentur et exprimentur; et, in expressione, dissolve Bauni deterativi et Tamburini abluentis folia iij.

" Fiat clister.

" In chlorosim quam vulgus pallidos-colores, aut febrim amatoriam appellat.

"Recipe Aretini figuras iiij.; R. Thomæ Sanchii de matrimonis folia ij.

"Infuditur in aquæ communis libras quinque.

"Fiat ptisana aperiens.¹

¹ "A marvel in chemistry, concerning a violent fermentation, accompanied with smoke, heat, and flame. Mingle an infusion of Quesnel* with one of Lallemand; † let fermentation proceed with much violence, energy, and noise, as the acids fight together, and eat their way into each other's alkaline salts; ‡ the fiery spirits will thus evaporate. When fermentation is over, put the liquid in an alembic: you will get nothing out of it, and find nothing left in it, but a caput mortuum.—A Gentle Aperient. Take two papers of Molina as pain-killer; of Escobar, to keep the bowels open, take six pages; take of Vasquez, to keep the passage easy, one leaf; infuse in four pounds of common water. When half has evaporated, strain

* A Jansenist, and great opponent of the Jesuits.

† A Jesuit father.

‡ A pun in the original; "sales" meaning also "witticisms."

“These are the drugs which our physician prescribed with remarkable success. ‘He did not wish,’ he said ‘lest he should kill his patients, to employ rare remedies, and such as are difficult to find—for example, a dedicatory epistle which had never made anybody yawn too short a preface; a bishop’s charge written by himself and the work of a Jansenist despised by a Jansenist, or else admired by a Jesuit.’ He held that remedies of that kind were only fit to maintain quackery, to which he had an insurmountable antipathy.”

and squeeze; and, while squeezing, dissolve in the mixture three leaves of Baun to act as detergent, and three of Tamburini to wash away impurities. Make a clyster of the result.—A cure for chlorosis, vulgarly called the green-sickness, or hot fit of love. Take four plates from Aretinus; take of Thomas Sanchez’ work on Marriage, two leaves. Infuse them in five pounds of common water and you will have a pleasant aperient.”*

* Molina, Escobar, Vasquez, Bauni, and Tamburini were Jesuits who replied to the attacks of the Jansenists. Their names are frequently mentioned in Pascal’s “Provincials.” The name of Escobar makes at least one appearance in English literature:

“Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar’s
Worked on the bone of a lie.”

BROWNING’S *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha*.

*Letter CXLIV.*¹

USBK TO RICA.

SOME days ago I met in a country-house which I was visiting, two learned men who have a great reputation here. Their characters astonished me. The conversation of the first, justly estimated, reduced itself to this : "What I have said is true, because I have said it." The conversation of the second went the other way about : "What I have not said is not true, because I have not said it."

I liked the first pretty well ; for it is not of the least consequence to me, however stiff in opinion a man may be ; but I cannot endure impertinence. The first defends his opinions ; that is to say, his own property ; the second attacks the opinions of others ; that is to say, the property of the whole world.

Oh, my dear Rica,² how badly vanity serves those who have a larger share of it than is necessary for self-preservation ! Such people wish to be admired by dint of offending. They wish to be superior, but they do not even attain to mediocrity.

Come hither to me, modest men, that I may embrace you ! You are the charm, the delight of life. You think that you are nobodies ; but I tell you that you possess the one thing needful. You think that no one is

¹ The seventh letter added in 1754.

² In the original "my dear Usbek," which is evidently a mistake.

humiliated by you, and you humiliate the whole world. And when I compare you in my mind with those imperious people whom I see everywhere, I drag them from their judgment-seat, and throw them at your feet.

Paris, the 22nd of the moon of
Chahban, 1720.

*Letter CXLV.*¹

USBK TO * * *.

A MAN of genius is usually fastidious in society. He chooses few acquaintances ; he finds the vast majority of people whom he is pleased to call bad company very tedious ; and as he cannot altogether hide his disgust, he makes many enemies.

Sure of pleasing when he likes, he very often does not like.

He is much given to criticism, because he sees and feels more than others.

He almost always ruins his fortune, because his genius supplies him with a great variety of means for that purpose.

He fails in his undertakings because he attempts too much. His vision, which carries far, causes him to have in view objects which are too remote. It must also be remembered that, in projecting a scheme, he is less impressed by the difficulties which spring from it, than by

¹ The eighth letter added in 1754.

the means of overcoming them, which he derives from his own resources.

He neglects minor details, although upon them the success of almost all great enterprises depends.

The mediocre man, on the other hand, tries to make use of everything, he is so well aware that he cannot afford to neglect trifles.

Universal approbation is very generally accorded to the mediocre man. Everyone is delighted to give the latter praise, and enchanted to withhold it from the former. While envy expends itself on the one and nothing is forgiven him, everything is construed in the other's favour ; vanity declares itself on his side.

But if so many disadvantages burden the man of genius, what is to be said of the hard lot of a scientific man ?

I never think of it without recalling a letter written by a savant to one of his friends. Here it is :

“SIR,

“I am a man whose nights are spent in studying through telescopes thirty feet long those great bodies which roll over our heads ; and when I wish for relaxation, I take my little microscopes and examine a maggot or a mite.

“I am not rich, and I have only one room ; I dare not even light a fire in it, because the unnatural warmth would cause the mercury to rise in my thermometer. Last winter, I thought I would die of cold ; and although my thermometer, which was at the lowest, told me that my

hands were freezing, I did not put myself about. And I have the consolation of knowing exactly the slightest changes in the weather for the whole of the past year.

“I have little intercourse with others ; and among all the people whom I meet, I know no one. But there is a man at Stockholm, another at Leipsic, and another at London, whom I have never seen, and whom I shall doubtless never see, but with whom I keep up a correspondence so punctual, that I do not miss a single post.

“But although I know no one in my neighbourhood, my reputation here is so bad, that I shall sooner or later require to leave it. Five years ago I was grossly insulted by a woman for having dissected a dog which she pretended belonged to her. The wife of a butcher, who happened to be present, took her side. And, while the one abused me heartily, the other pelted me with stones, along with Dr. * * * , who was in my company, and who received such dreadful blows on the head, both back and front, that his mind was much shaken.

“Since that time, whenever a dog strays away from the street corner, it is at once taken for granted that he has passed through my hands. A decent citizen’s wife, who had lost her pet dog, which she said she loved better than her children, came the other day and fainted in my room ; not finding her dog, she summoned me before the magistrate. I believe I shall never be delivered from the persistent malice of these women, who, in shrieking tones, din me daily with the funeral oration

of all the beasts that have died during the last six years. I am," etc.

All scientific men were formerly accused of magic. I am not surprised at it. Each one said to himself, "I have carried human capacity as far as it can go; and yet a certain savant has distanced me: beyond a doubt he deals in sorcery."

Now that accusations of that kind have been discredited, another course has been taken; and the scientific man can hardly escape the reproach of ungodliness or of heresy. It is of little consequence that the people hold him innocent: the wound once made can never be quite closed again. It will always be a tender spot. An opponent will come thirty years after and say to him in an unassuming way, "God forbid that I should think you have been accused justly; but you were obliged to defend yourself." And thus his justification itself is turned against him.

If he writes a history, and shows himself possessed of high intelligence and some share of righteousness, a thousand unjust accusations are brought against him. Someone will stir up the magistrate against him about an incident that took place ages ago, and if his pen is not to be bought they would have it restrained.

They are more fortunate, however, than those recreants who renounce their faith for a trifling pension; who hardly make a single farthing by all their impostures; who overturn the constitution of the empire, diminish

the rights of one state to increase those of another, give to princes what they have taken from the people, revive obsolete rights, humour the passions which are in vogue in their time, and the favourite vices of the king; imposing upon posterity all the more infamously, that means are lacking to destroy their evidence.

But it is not enough that an author should have to endure all these insults; it is not enough that he should have been continually anxious about the success of his work. When it sees the light at last, that work, which has cost him so much, brings down upon him quarrels from all quarters. How can he avoid them? He holds an opinion, and maintains it in his writings, quite unaware that another man two hundred leagues away asserts the very reverse. There you have the way in which war arises.

But may he not hope to acquire some degree of fame? No; at the most he is only esteemed by those who have studied the same branch of science as he. The philosopher has a supreme contempt for the man whose head is stuffed with facts; and he in his turn is looked upon as a visionary by the possessor of a good memory.

As for those who profess a haughty ignorance, they would have all mankind buried in the same oblivion as themselves.

When a man lacks a particular talent, he indemnifies himself by despising it: he removes the impediment between him and merit; and in that way finds himself

on a level with those of whose works he formerly stood in awe.

Lastly, an author requires in pursuit of an equivocal reputation to abstain from all pleasure and sacrifice his health.

Paris, the 26th of the moon of
Chahban, 1720.

*Letter CXLVI.*¹

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE.

It was long ago said that a minister cannot be great unless he is sincere.

A private person may avail himself of the obscurity in which he is placed; he discredits himself only in the opinion of a few, and the mask he wears deceives others; but a minister who steps aside from the straight path has a witness, a judge, in every subject of the state he governs.

Is it too daring to say that the greatest evil done by an unscrupulous minister is not the damage to the interests of his sovereign, not the ruin wrought among his people, but quite another thing, and in my opinion a thousand times more dangerous, namely, the bad example which he sets?

You know that I have for a long time travelled in the Indies. There I beheld a nation, upright by nature, led

¹ Another satire on the "system" of Law.

away in an instant, from the lowest to the highest in the land, by the bad example of a minister; I beheld an entire race, in whom generosity, integrity, candour, and sincerity had always been regarded as natural qualities, become, in a flash, the most despicable of peoples; I beheld the contagion spread, sparing not even the healthiest members, and the most upright men act in the unworthiest manner, violating the first principles of justice, upon the vain pretext that injustice had been done to them.

They appealed to detestable laws, necessity, injustice and treachery, in support of the most iniquitous deeds.

I saw honesty banished from business, the holiest contracts become void, and all the laws of the family overturned. I saw miserly debtors, insolent in their poverty, unworthy instruments of the anger of the law and of the exigency of the time, make a pretence of payment, while they plunged a dagger into the bosom of their benefactors. I saw others, viler still, buy for next to nothing, or rather gather from the ground, oak leaves,¹ and give them in exchange for the substance of widows and orphans.

I saw suddenly spring up in all hearts an insatiable thirst for riches. I saw men form in a moment a detestable conspiracy to acquire wealth, not by honest labour and liberal industry, but by the ruin of the sovereign, of the state, and of their fellow-citizens.

I saw a respectable citizen, in these disastrous times,

¹ Paper money.

never retire to rest without saying, "To-day I have ruined one family, to-morrow I shall ruin another."

"I am going," said another, "with a man in black who carries an inkhorn in his hand, and a pointed weapon¹ behind his ear, to assassinate all my creditors."

Another said, "I find that I am prospering: it is true that when I went three days ago to make a certain payment, I left a whole family in tears; that I have squandered the portions of two well-born girls; that I have deprived a boy of the means of education—his father will die of grief, the mother pines away broken-hearted: but I have only done what the law allows me."²

What crime can be greater than that which a minister commits when he corrupts the morals of a whole nation, debases the loftiest spirits, tarnishes the lustre of rank, obscures virtue itself, and levels the highest born with the most despised?

What will posterity say when it has to blush for the shame of its forefathers? What will the next generation say when it compares the iron age of earlier times with the age of gold which gave it birth? I doubt not that the nobles will remove from their genealogies a degree of nobility dishonouring to them, and leave the present generation in the oblivion it has so well deserved.

¹ A pen.

² That is, paid a debt in worthless paper.

Letter CXLVII.

THE CHIEF EUNUCH TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

THINGS have come to such a pass here that it is not to be endured ; your wives imagine that your departure exempts them from all restraint ; there has been most atrocious behaviour : I myself tremble at the harrowing story I am about to tell.

Some days ago Zelis, on her way to the mosque, let her veil fall, and appeared before the people with her face almost wholly uncovered.

I found Zachi in bed with one of her maids, a thing absolutely forbidden by the laws of the seraglio.

I intercepted, by the merest chance in the world, a letter which I send you : I have never been able to discover to whom it was sent.

Yesterday evening a young fellow was observed in the garden of the seraglio ; he made his escape over the wall.

Add to this all that has not come to my knowledge ; for you are certainly betrayed. I await your orders ; and until the happy moment of their receipt, I shall be in a state of intolerable anxiety. But, if you do not leave all these women to my discretion, I will not be responsible for one of them, and will have news as heartrending to send you every day.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 1st of the
moon of Rhegeb, 1717.

Letter CXLVIII.

USBK TO THE CHIEF EUNUCH, AT THE SERAGLIO AT
ISPAHAN.

RECEIVE by this letter unlimited power over the whole seraglio ; give your orders with as much authority as I do ; let fear and terror accompany you ; carry penance and chastisement from room to room ; let dismay be upon all, and tears flow from every eye in your presence ; examine the whole seraglio, beginning with the slaves ; spare not my love : let all bow before your dreaded tribunal ; bring to light the most hidden secrets ; purify that infamous place, and restore banished virtue. For, from this moment, on your head shall be the slightest fault that may be committed. I imagine it was Zelis to whom the letter you intercepted was addressed : examine that matter with the eyes of a lynx.

* * *, the 11th of the moon of
Zilhage, 1718.

Letter CXLIX.

NARSIT TO USBK, AT PARIS.

MAGNIFICENT lord, the chief eunuch has just died : as I am the oldest of your slaves I have taken his place until you make known whom you select.

Two days after his death, one of your letters addressed

to him was brought to me : I refrained from opening it, but covered it up respectfully, and locked it away, until you shall have informed me of your sacred pleasure.

Yesterday a slave came to me in the middle of the night, and told me that he had seen a young man in the seraglio : I rose, inquired into the matter, and found it had been a vision.

I kiss your feet, most noble lord ; and beg you to confide in my zeal, my experience, and my old age.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 5th of the
first moon of Gemmadi, 1718.

Letter CL.

USBEK TO NARSIT, AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN.

MISERABLE slave ! you have in your hands letters which contain orders for prompt and strong measures ; the least delay may reduce me to despair ; and you remain inactive under an empty pretext !

Atrocious things are going on : perhaps the half of my slaves at this very moment merit death. With this I send you the letter which the chief eunuch wrote me before he died concerning these disorders. Had you opened the despatch addressed to him, you would have found bloody instructions. Read these instructions, and execute them, or you shall perish.

* * *, the 25th of the moon of
Chalval, 1718.

Letter CLI.

SOLIM TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

WERE I to be silent any longer, I should be as guilty as the worst of the criminals in your seraglio.

I was the confidant of the chief eunuch, the most faithful of your slaves. When he felt himself near his end, he sent for me, and spoke to me as follows : " I am dying ; but the only grief I have in leaving life, is that with my dying eyes I have seen the guilt of my master's wives. May Heaven preserve him from all the misery which I foresee ! After my death, may my threatening shade appear to admonish these faithless ones of their duty, and to keep them still in awe ! Here are the keys of those dreaded places ; take them to the eldest of the black eunuchs. But if, after my death, he should prove a careless guardian, remember to let your master know." He expired in my arms with these words on his lips.

I know that he wrote you some time before his death about the conduct of your wives : there is in the seraglio a letter which would have carried terror to every bosom had it been opened. That which you wrote since has been intercepted three leagues from here. I know not how it is ; but everything turns out badly. Meantime your wives do not maintain the least reserve : since the death of the chief eunuch, their licence knows no limit ; Roxana alone abides by her duty, and preserves her modesty. Their morals grow more corrupt every day.

The faces of your wives no longer exhibit that stern and noble virtue which reigned there formerly ; the unusual gaiety which prevails is in my opinion an infallible sign of some uncustomary pleasure. In the smallest trifles, I notice that liberties are taken before unknown. Even among your slaves there prevails a certain disinclination to do their duty, and to obey rules, which surprises me ; they are no longer inspired by that ardent zeal for your service, which seemed to animate the whole seraglio.

For the last eight days your wives have been in the country, at one of your most secluded seats. They say that the slave who has charge of it has been bribed ; and that, on the day before your wives arrived, he concealed two men in a secret recess in the wall of the principal room, from which they came out at night, when we had retired. The old eunuch, who is at present our chief, is an imbecile, who can be made to believe anything.

I am possessed with a burning desire for vengeance on these traitors : and if Heaven, in your interest, ordains that you should think me capable of ruling, I promise you that, though your wives may not be virtuous, they shall at least be faithful.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 6th of the
first moon of Rebiab, 1719.

Letter CLII.

NARSIT TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

ROXANA and Zelis were anxious to go to the country ; and I did not think it necessary to refuse them. Happy Usbek ! the possessor of faithful wives, and ever watchful slaves ; virtue seems to have made its home in the abode which I rule. Be assured that nothing shall happen of which you would not approve.

A misfortune has occurred which gives me great uneasiness. Some Armenian merchants, lately come to Ispahan, brought a letter of yours addressed to me ; I sent a slave for it, but he was robbed on his return and the letter lost. Write me therefore at once ; because I imagine that, at this juncture, you will have matters of importance to communicate to me.

The Seraglio at Fatme, the 6th of the
first moon of Rebiab, 1719.

Letter CLIII.

USBK TO SOLIM, AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN.

I PLACE the sword in your hand. I entrust you with what is now to me the dearest thing in the world, my vengeance, to wit. In entering upon this new employment, banish all feeling, all pity. I have written to my wives to obey you implicitly ; in their guilty confusion,

they will sink down at your glance. I must owe to you my happiness and my peace of mind. Give me back my seraglio as I left it. Begin by purifying¹ it; exterminate the guilty, and make those quake with fear who are inclined to become so. What may you not expect from your master for such signal services? It only remains with yourself to obtain a position far above your present one, and above anything you have ever hoped for.

Paris, the 4th of the moon of
Chahban, 1719.

Letter CLIV.

USBEK TO HIS WIVES, AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN.

MAY this letter fall among you like a thunderbolt from a stormy sky! Solim is your chief eunuch, not to guard you only, but to punish you. Let the whole seraglio humble itself before him. He is empowered to judge your past deeds; and in future he will subject you to a discipline so harsh, that, if you do not regret your virtue, you will certainly regret your liberty.

Paris, the 4th of the moon of
Chahban, 1719.

¹ *Expier* in the original. It is used again by Montesquieu in this unusual sense in "L'Esprit des Lois."

Letter CLV.

USBEK TO NESSIR, AT ISPAHAN.

HAPPY is he, who, estimating at its full value a life of ease and tranquillity, makes his own family the centre of his thought, and knows no other land save that in which he was born !

I live in a barbarous country, surrounded by everything that offends me, and absent from all in which I am interested. A sombre melancholy holds me ; I am dreadfully depressed : I feel as if I were about to be annihilated ; and I only recover myself when some dismal jealousy awakes within me, and brings in its train fear, suspicion, hatred, and regret.

You understand me, Nessir ; my heart is as open to you as your own. You would pity me, if you knew my deplorable condition. Sometimes I have to wait six whole months for news of the seraglio ; I count every moment as it passes, prolonging them by my impatience ; and when the expected moment is about to arrive, a sudden revolution takes-place in my heart ; my hand trembles to open a letter that may be fatal ; the anxiety which caused my despair seems to me the happiest frame of mind in which I could be, and I dread to be forced from it by some stroke more cruel than a thousand deaths.

But, whatever reason I may have had to leave my

country, and although I owe my life to my flight, I can no longer, Nessir, endure this dreadful exile. Should I not die all the same a prey to grief? I have pressed Rica a thousand times to leave this foreign land, but he always thwarts my purpose, and keeps me here under a thousand pretexts: he seems to have forgotten his country, or rather he seems to have forgotten me, he is so indifferent to my grief.

How wretched I am! I wish to see my country again, perhaps only to become more wretched. Ah! what shall I do there? I shall but hand my head to my enemies. That is not all: I shall enter the seraglio, where I must demand an account of the disastrous time of my absence; and should I find any criminals, what am I to do? And if the idea of it alone overcomes me at such a distance, how will it be when my presence brings it home to me? How shall it be, if I must see, if I must hear what I dare not imagine without a shudder? How shall it be, in short, if I myself must order the infliction of punishments, which shall be everlasting witnesses to my own vexation and despair?

I shall shut myself up within walls more terrible to me than to the women which they guard; I shall take with me all my suspicions; the eagerness of my wives will not remove them in the least; in my bed, in their arms, I shall only possess my anxiety: at a time so unsuitable for reflection, my jealousy will make occasions for it. Worthless scum of human kind, vile slaves whose hearts are for ever closed to all the feelings of love, you would

no longer grumble at your condition, if you knew the misery of mine.

Paris, the 4th of the moon of
Chahban, 1719.

Letter CLVI.

ROXANA TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

HORROR, darkness, and terror reign in the seraglio; a dreadful affliction is upon us: at every moment a tiger vents on us all his rage. He has tortured two white eunuchs, who have only confessed their innocence; he has sold part of our slaves, and forced us to share among us the services of those which remained. Zachy and Zelis have received in their chambers, in the darkness of the night, most unworthy treatment; the wretch has not feared to lay his sacrilegious hands upon them. He keeps us shut up each in her apartment; and although we are alone there, he forces us to wear our veils. We are no longer allowed to speak; to write would be a crime: we have no liberty except to weep.

A crowd of new eunuchs have entered the seraglio, and beset us night and day: our sleep is constantly interrupted by their real or feigned suspicions. What consoles me is, that all this cannot last for ever, and that my troubles will end with my life. And the end is not

far distant, cruel Usbek : I will not give you time to put an end to all these outrages.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 2nd of the
moon of Maharram, 1720.

Letter CLVII.¹

ZACHI TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

OH, Heaven ! a savage has outraged me even in the very manner of punishing me ! He has inflicted upon me that chastisement, the first effect of which is to shock one's modesty ; that most humiliating of chastisements, which takes one back to one's childhood.

My soul, at first overpowered by shame, recovered consciousness and began to be exasperated, when my cries resounded through the vaults of my apartments. They heard me asking mercy from the vilest of human beings, and trying to excite his pity, in proportion as he became inexorable.

Since that time his insolent and slavish mind dominates mine. His presence, his looks, his words, all horrible things, overwhelm me. When I am alone, I have at least the consolation of weeping ; but when he appears before me, frenzy seizes me : I find myself impotent, and I sink into despair.

The tiger dares to tell me that you are the author of all these barbarities. He wishes to deprive me of my love, and even to desecrate the feelings of my heart.

¹ The ninth letter added in 1754.



When he utters the name of him whom I love, I am unable to complain; I can only die.

I have endured your absence, and my love has been preserved by its own strength. The nights, the days, the moments were all dedicated to you. I was even proud of my love, and yours made me respected here. But now . . . No, I can no longer bear the humiliation which has overtaken me. If I am innocent, return to love me; return, if I am guilty, that I may die at your feet.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 2nd of the
moon of Maharram, 1720.

Letter CLVIII.¹

ZELIS TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

You are a thousand leagues from me, and yet you condemn me! A thousand leagues from me, and yet you punish me!

When a barbarous eunuch lays his vile hands upon me, it is by your order: it is the tyrant who outrages me, and not the instrument of his tyranny.

You may, if you choose, redouble your cruel treatment. My heart is at peace, since it can no longer love you. Your soul is debased, and you have become cruel. Rest assured that you are not beloved. Farewell.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 2nd of the
moon of Maharram, 1720.

¹ The tenth of 1754.

Letter CLIX.

SOLIM TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

MAGNIFICENT lord, I lament for myself, and I lament for you : never did faithful servant sink into such an abyss of despair. Behold your misfortunes and mine ; I write them with a trembling hand.

I swear, by all the prophets of heaven, that since you confided your wives to me, I have watched them night and day ; that my anxiety has never left me for a single moment. When I assumed office I commenced with chastisement, which I have discontinued without relaxing my accustomed austerity.

But what am I saying ? Why do I boast of fidelity which has been useless to you ? Forget all my past services : look upon me as a traitor, and punish me for all the crimes which I have been unable to prevent. Roxana, the haughty Roxana—Oh, Heaven ! in whom can we trust henceforth ? You suspected Zelis, and never for a moment doubted Roxana ; but her fierce virtue was a cruel imposture : it was the veil of her treachery. I surprised her in the arms of a young man, who, when he saw himself discovered, ran at me, and struck me twice with his dagger : the eunuchs came at the noise and surrounded him : he made a long defence, and wounded several of them ; he wished even to re-enter the room to die, he said, in the presence of

Roxana. But at last he yielded to numbers, and fell at our feet.

I know not, sublime lord, if I shall wait for your stern commands. You have placed your vengeance in my hands; and I ought not to defer it.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 8th of the
first moon of Rebiab, 1720.

*Letter CLX.*¹

SOLIM TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

I HAVE made up my mind : your misfortunes shall disappear ; I am going to punish.

Already I feel a secret joy : my soul and yours will soon be appeased : we shall exterminate crime, and make innocence turn pale.

Oh, all you who seem made only to be unconscious of your own feelings, and to be indignant even at your own desires, everlasting slaves of shame and modesty, would that I could bring you in crowds into this unhappy seraglio, to astonish you with the torrent of blood I am about to shed !

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 8th of the
first moon of Rebiab, 1720.

¹ The eleventh and last of the letters added in 1754.

Letter CLXI.

ROXANA TO USBEK, AT PARIS.

YES, I have deceived you ; I have led away your eunuchs : I have made sport of your jealousy ; and I have known how to turn your frightful seraglio into a place of pleasure and delight.

I am at the point of death ; the poison courses through my veins : for what should I do here, since the only man who bound me to life is no more ? I die ; but my spirit shall not pass unaccompanied : I have despatched before me those sacrilegious gaolers who spilt the sweetest blood in the world.

How could you think that I was such a weakling as to imagine there was nothing for me in the world but to worship your caprices ; that while you indulged all your desires, you should have the right to thwart me in all mine ? No : I have lived in slavery, and yet always retained my freedom : I have remodelled your laws upon those of nature ; and my mind has always maintained its independence.

You ought to thank me, then, for the sacrifice I made you ; for having sunk so low as to seem to be yours ; for having, like a coward, hidden in my heart what I ought to have published to all the earth ; finally, for having profaned virtue, by permitting my submission to your humours to be called by that name.

You were amazed never to find in me the transports of

love : had you known me better you would have found all the violence of hate.

For a long time you have had the satisfaction of believing that you had conquered a heart like mine : now we are both delighted : you thought me deceived, and I have deceived you.

Doubtless such a letter as this you little expected to receive. Can it be possible that after having overwhelmed you with affliction I shall still force you to admire my courage? But all is ended now ; the poison destroys me, my strength leaves me, my pen drops from my hand ; even my hat grows weaker : I die.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 8th of the
first moon of Rebiab, 1720.

THE END.

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